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HYDROCARBON POLLUTION REMEDIATION PROJECT
HYPREP...Remediating the Environment and Restoring Livelihoods

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HYPREP HERALD
NOT TO BE SOLD

THE PC'S DESK

PROF. NENIBARINI ZABBEY
PROJECT COORDINATOR
(HYPREP)

The core mandate of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) is to remediate crude oil-polluted sites and restore livelihoods in the Ogoni region. Remediation involves efforts and processes that reduce the amount of oil contaminants in the environment (namely, soil, groundwater, surface water, and sediment) to levels that are permissible according to regulatory standards, which pose minimal or no risk to humans and biodiversity.

Assisted remediation accelerates the natural processes that remove pollutants (i.e., remediation by natural attenuation). Remediation, in turn, leads to biodiversity recovery (i.e., the return of genes, species, and ecosystems). Therefore, the aim of ongoing HYPREP shoreline cleanup and mangrove restoration projects is to promote biodiversity recovery in Ogoni. This is because when the level of oil in the environment is reduced, the toxic effects on different life forms also reduce. The harmful effects of oil can be chronic or acute. Chronic exposures result in subtle effects on life such as changes in behaviour (e.g., hyperactivity), reduced ability to avoid predators, exposure to diseases due to reduced immunity, inability to reproduce or reduced reproductive output (number of live births), etc. Even though the outright death of component organisms does not occur, chronic effects, over time, eventually lead to reduced populations and a decline in community size and diversity.

In contrast, acute toxic exposure causes the immediate death of sensitive organisms. In which case, only a few tolerant species or individuals will survive. Extreme pollution toxicity can result in total mortality, the killing of all species/individuals. This is how pollution leads to loss of biodiversity.

However, the loss of biodiversity is not limited to pollution. It is generally caused by factors summarized with the acronym HIPPOC: habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, population growth, overexploitation, and climate change. At this stage, the ongoing shoreline cleanup and mangrove restoration in Ogoniland are directly addressing four out of the six causes of biodiversity loss. Both efforts (shoreline cleanup and mangrove restoration) restore the habitat, remove invasive nipa palm, decontaminate the environment, and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Mangroves sequester (remove and store) more carbon (a significant cause of climate change) five times more than tropical rainforests. This means only the impact of population growth and overexploitation is yet to be directly addressed. Population growth and overexploitation are mutually reinforcing.

The greater the number of people, the more likely it is that natural capital (e.g., food species, firewood) will be harvested, even beyond the carrying capacity of the environment. Unfortunately, overharvesting is facilitated by the open-access system in place. However, efforts are geared toward developing a sustainable co-management model with the Ogoni community through intentional consultations and stakeholder inputs, which will address the threat of overharvesting in the region.

By rehabilitating the habitat through remediation, mangrove restoration, and reducing the impact of invasive nipa palm, we are recording the gradual return of ecosystem goods and services through biodiversity recovery. Key species are beginning to come back. These include mudskipper, mudwhelk (locally called perinwinkle), mangrove snails, dogwhelk, whelk, shrimps, crabs, Nile Monitor, oyster, birds, and some finfish. Having shoals of fish fry marooned in pools of water on the mudflat during low tide is an indication of biodiversity recovery. Periwinkle picking in Bomu Creek, where we have decontaminated the shoreline and rehabilitated over 500 hectares of mangrove through restorative planting of different mangrove species, is already supporting the livelihoods of women and young persons. It is exciting seeing castnet fishers fishing in the creek at low tide by wading.

Not all food species will easily return naturally. The West African bloody cockle, locally known as *kóó,* falls into this category due to the species' reduced stock size in the few areas where it still exists, further afield. The Ogonis highly relish bloody cockle, and the cockle had supported their livelihoods for centuries before it became locally extinct in the area in late 2008. The shellfish was overharvested while oil pollution exterminated it. Fast forward, HYPREP is keen on restoring the bloody cockle in Ogoni. We are collaborating with research students and experts from the University of Port Harcourt, the Rivers State University and the African Regional Aquaculture Centre (ARAC) of the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR) to restore the cockle. At the NIOMR Brackishwater Station in Buguma, we have commenced the artificial breeding and restocking programme of the bloody cockle.

As reported in the February 2025 edition of this newsletter, we have successfully stimulated the mature cockle

(broodstock) to breed and managed the changes of the larval stages to the D-shape larvae. Current research emphasis is on the management and transformation of the D-shape larvae into spat— the shell-covered young cockle. Restocking of the tidal flats requires mass production of the spats. While we are optimistic about the success of the bloody cockle artificial breeding and restocking initiative, we have started a complementary wild cockle culture and dispersal experiment at the Bomu Creek. This involves stocking the bloody cockle broodstock and spats in a delineated and protected area on the sandy mud flat. The implanted mature cockles and spats will enable us to monitor their growth rate and breeding in the wild. Using nature-based materials in demarcating and securing the culture bed, the protective border woods are buried slightly above the sediment level to protect the outward migration of the stocked cockles, retain the natural water flow and ensure a seamless dispersal of the produced larvae. To prevent the poaching of the seeded cockles, we set up the bed within the view of security personnel at the waterfront base camp. Night poaching is a more severe threat to the cockles. Similarly, there is also the potential for nighttime boating disturbances. Thus, we installed mini solar-powered lights at the boundaries of the culture bed to deter night poaching and boating through the designated culture area. Of course, the lighting intensity is mild to protect the sanctity of the night and maintain photoperiod integrity. We shall update you on the progress of the dual bloody cockle restoration initiatives in the coming months. As always, we value your support and feedback.

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

In This Issue

In this edition we bring you the cheering news of the delivery of additional four water projects to serve Bodo, Uegwure Boue, Taabaa and Eteo communities, making it a total of forty Ogoni communities that now have access to potable water.

The inauguration ceremony that was performed by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal took a carnival like outlook as traditional rulers, political leaders, clergymen, women and youth groups and cultural troupes thronged the different venues both in celebration and appreciation of the remarkable feat of provision of potable water to communities, that for decades had struggled to get this essential resource because of ground water contamination by oil.

The Honourable Minister also used the occasion to commission the Gokana Area Office to bridge the communication gap between the Project Office in Port Harcourt and the grassroots.

In May, the Irish Ambassador to Nigeria, His Excellency, Peter Ryan was in Port Harcourt to hold talks with the Project Coordinator, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey on possible areas of collaboration to effectively deliver on the mandate of the Project to the Ogoni people. The follow-up to that first meeting was held recently at the Irish Embassy in Abuja when Prof. Zabbey came calling on the diplomat.

The meeting this time went into specific discussion on how to operationalize and sustain the several legacy projects of HYPREP, especially the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration.

As the news of the delivery of HYPREP mandate continues to spread, more visitors have made it a point of duty to see for themselves the reality on ground. The latest callers at the HYPREP Project Office were the Executive members of the South-South Zonal Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists who were in Port Harcourt for a meeting. The senior journalists were taken on a tour of HYPREP projects in Ogoni and were impressed with what they saw. From water projects to shoreline clean-up and mangrove restoration, construction of legacy infrastructure to land remediation, the visiting members of the fourth estate of the realm could report that indeed HYPREP is working and demanded that the Project be made an agency so it could extend its works to other polluted parts of the Niger Delta.

One hundred Ogoni youths who began their training four months ago to become practitioners in the entertainment industry have completed their courses and premiered some short films that were shown at their graduation ceremony at the University of Port Harcourt where they were trained. It is another loud testimony of how HYPREP is giving Ogoni people means of livelihood and developing human capital.

The Project is following up on its initiatives, ensuring that they are not abandoned. The Project Coordinator, Prof. Zabbey was at Bomu to set up the culture beds for the introduction of the West African Bloody cockles to complement it artificial propagating experience.

The two Governing structures of HYPREP – the Governing Council and the Board of Trustees now have new members. The newly constituted Council and Board were appointed by His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The names of the new appointees are reproduced in this edition.

We have maintained our poetry corner and put together some features on developments on the Project for your update. We urge you to go through the pages to get as much information as possible on our operations.

News

HYPREP PROVIDES WATER FOR FOUR MORE OGONI COMMUNITIES

Bodo in Gokana, Eteo in Eleme, Uegwure and Taabaa in Khana Local Government Area have joined the league of communities in Ogoni that now have potable water provided by the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP).

The recent water commissioning brings to forty (40) the number of Ogoni communities that now have access to potable water with more water projects under construction across Ogoni.

Provision of potable water is a key recommendation contained in the environmental assessment report on Ogoni by the United Nations Environment Programme which the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project is implementing.

The Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal who inaugurated the water project in Bodo said every other water project constructed by HYPREP is part of a broader commitment to restore the environment and improve the quality of life of Ogoni people, acknowledging that access to safe drinking water is not merely a basic necessity but a fundamental human right, and that the Federal Government is not only laying a physical foundation but also reaffirming its unwavering commitment to upholding human rights.

The Minister also stated that the commissioning underscores the shared dedication to the health, dignity, and well-being of Ogoni communities that have long endured the consequences of environmental degradation.

Environment Minister, Lawal Unveils the Plaque at the Commissioning of Bodo Water Station

While calling for collaboration and collective resolve towards the maintenance of the water projects, the Minister commended HYPREP, implementing partners, community representatives, and other stakeholders who worked to bring to completion the projects, which he said symbolize hope, equity, and justice to the communities.

Lawal charged the people never to lose sight of the context in which these projects are taking place, recalling that for decades, Ogoniland has borne the brunt of environmental pollution from oil exploration and related industrial activities, assuring that the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration is determined to correct past wrongs and deliver genuine remediation, development and renewal to affected communities.

"These water facilities are part of a holistic strategy as well as an integrated approach that includes soil and groundwater remediation, healthcare services, livelihood restoration, and infrastructural development. Through HYPREP, we are laying a sustainable development that is inclusive, participatory, and community-driven.

"As we celebrate this milestone, I urge the residents of Bodo, Uegwure, Taabaa, and Eteo to take ownership of these facilities, ensure proper usage, safeguard them against vandalism, and collaborate with HYPREP to maintain their functionality", he appealed, stressing that sustainability begins with community stewardship.

The Honourable Minister also thanked traditional rulers, the youth, and civil society organizations for their continued cooperation and patience that are instrumental to the

peace and progress of the Project.

While expressing President Tinubu's appreciation of the resilience and steadfastness of the Ogoni people, he reaffirmed Government's unwavering commitment to the full implementation of the UNEP Report and the sustainable development of Ogoniland.

Project Coordinator of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey in his welcome remarks at the event expressed joy over the coming of the Honourable Minister, Balarabe Lawal to commission additional completed water facilities in Ogoni communities, noting that the commissioning of four water facilities increases the number of communities in Ogoni with reticulated potable water to 40, which ensures that the people have access to clean and safe water.

Prof. Zabbey said the water projects also reaffirm HYPREP's commitment to the full implementation of UNEP-recommended actions in Ogoniland, and that HYPREP is pleased to confirm that it is on track in its quest to fulfil other areas of its mandate.

The Project Coordinator explained that in environmental remediation, HYPREP has completed and obtained NOSDRA's closeout certification for 50 Lots in the simple-risk sites, the remediation of medium-risk sites is 38% complete. "As of today, the ongoing phase 1 shoreline clean-up and mangrove restoration projects are 57.7% and 93% complete respectively, while the multi-species mangrove restoration efforts are ecologically sound and will promote biodiversity recovery and fisheries enhancement", he said, disclosing that HYPREP has taken steps to seek the designation of restored mangroves in Ogoniland as a RAMSAR site.

He further explained that the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration is currently at 90%, while the phase 1 of the Ogoni Power Project is over 40% complete, and that more than 5000 Ogoni youths and women have been trained in 20 skill sets, adding that while the Ogoni Specialist Hospital and Buan Cottage Hospital are 86% and 98% complete, respectively, HYPREP has now reached the point of simultaneous implementation of UNEP's key recommendations with the commencement of the Ogoni Health Study and other programmes on livelihoods and remediation.

On job creation, the HYPREP Coordinator said over 7000 direct jobs have been created, thereby revolutionizing the socio-economic landscape of Ogoni and by extension, the Niger Delta, and under the

Environment Minister, Lawal Presents Clean Cook Stove to a Resident during the Bodo Water Project Commissioning to Reduce Burden on Mangroves for Firewood

guidance of the Honourable Minister of Environment, HYPREP has significantly expanded its peace building efforts over the past two years, in line with the provisions of the official Gazette establishing it which has helped foster unity, stability, and collaboration across Ogoni.

Prof. Zabbey made it clear that HYPREP is fully aware that community engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and accountability are crucial to achieving its goals, noting that there has been a remarkable increase in the number of requests for collaboration and participation from various stakeholders, which is a clear indicator of growing confidence and ownership of the project by the Ogoni people.

"We are deepening stakeholder engagement, strengthening monitoring and evaluation, reinforcing transparency and accountability, while pushing to ensure that the benefits of the project reach every corner of Ogoniland. We should see this project as a symbol of renewed hope, in line with Mr. President's agenda as driven by the Honourable Minister of Environment", he said, while acknowledging the support and patience of the Ogoni people, Civil Society Organizations, Renaissance Africa Energy Company and other partners, appealing to them to continue to work hand in hand with the Project Coordination Office to ensure the clean-up becomes a model for environmental restoration, peace-building, and sustainable development in the Niger Delta and across Nigeria.

The Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal and his entourage had earlier paid homage to the palace of the Paramount Ruler of Bodo City, HRH, King John Bari-iyedum Berebon, Gberedeela V111, and his Council of Chiefs and Elders.

Environment Minister, Lawal Cuts the Tape on Bodo Water Project

In appreciation of the commitment of the Honourable Minister to the Ogoni clean-up project and the provision of potable water in Bodo, the Paramount Ruler of Bodo and his Council of Chiefs and Elders conferred on the Minister a chieftaincy title, "*Mene Silebatom*" which by translations means, the king who does good works. The Honourable Minister was dressed in traditional attire alongside the Project Coordinator of HYPREP, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey.

The Paramount Ruler used the opportunity to declare their full support for HYPREP, assuring the Honourable Minister of the protection of the water project and other facilities of HYPREP in Bodo community.

The team also inspected the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration, Wiiyaakara under construction.

Dignitaries at the event include the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited, Engr. Tony Attah, ably represented by the General Manager, Engr. Igo Weli; Director General of the National Environmental Standards Regulatory Enforcement Agency, Prof. Innocent Barikor; former Minister of Commerce, Chief Kenneth Kobani; former President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP, Legborsi Pyagbara; Gbenemene Tai Kingdom, HRM, King Samuel Nnee; the Kasimene Bangha, HRM King Dr. T. Y. Suanu Baridam, the Co-chairman of the Ogoni Dialogue Committee, Archbishop Ignatius Kattey and the Head, Department of Mathematics, Rivers State University, Prof. Ngia Nafo among others.

OGONI CLEAN-UP: WE'VE INDEED SEEN GOOD OUTCOMES

– MD/CEO, Renaissance Africa Energy Coy

Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited, Ogoni leaders and stakeholders in the restoration and conservation of the environment have commended the Management of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) on the completion and commissioning of more projects under the Ogoni clean-up project.

At the commissioning of additional four water facilities reticulated community wide, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited, Engr. Tony Attah commended HYPREP on its achievement in the thematic area of provision of potable water which he said marks a significant milestone in the journey to improve public health and enhance quality of life of the people of Ogoni.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Renaissance Energy, Engr. Attah who was represented by the General Manager, Relations and Sustainable Development of the company, Mr. Igo Weli appreciated the Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, for extending to him the invitation to be part of the commissioning exercise through the HYPREP Coordinator, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey, and for the time and energy he has invested in the Ogoni clean-up project.

"We've indeed, seen good outcomes. We congratulate the HYPREP team for the successful completion of four additional water schemes in Bodo, Uegwure Boue, Taabaa and Eteo. These achievements mark a significant milestone in the journey to improve public health and enhance quality of life of the people of Ogoniland.

Mr. Igo Weli Cuts the Tape on Uegwure-Boue Water Station

"We also acknowledge the collaborative efforts of the federal, state and local institutions in supporting HYPREP's work. Your continued engagement is vital to the success and sustainability of this initiative," Engr. Attah said.

The Renaissance Group Chief Executive stated that the resilience and commitment of the people of Ogoni to community development is greatly admired, stressing that their support to project like this reflects a shared desire for progress and well-being, and that the Project Coordinator confirmed it in his speech.

Engr. Attah, while commissioning the Uegwure Boue Water Project, commended HYPREP on the provision of potable water in Ogoni and called on the natives to continue to support the Project Coordinator and avoid acts capable of obstructing HYPREP operations in the area.

He explained that at Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited they value opportunities to engage with stakeholders, and to witness initiatives that promote public health and community welfare, and commended the company's team on Ogoni Restoration Project, which he said is working with HYPREP to actualize its mandate of remediating polluted sites in Ogoni and restoring the livelihoods of the people.

On his part, the Director General of the National Environmental Standards and Regulation Enforcement Agency, NESREA, Prof. Innocent Barikor while congratulating the Project Coordinator of HYPREP, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey on the completion of the four water projects, said he is proud of what HYPREP is doing, particularly under Prof. Zabbey as Project Coordinator.

According to him, "it would be recalled that in the history of the development of HYPREP, this is perhaps the most strategic clean-up

approach we have ever had in the attempt to implement the programmes of HYPREP. And perhaps, what is even more important is the fact that the Coordinator has been able to strategically place and coordinate biodiversity and reclamation with the rest of it. And of course, this has also gone at the same time with the provision of livelihoods.

"I think that in the context where he presented his address, I discovered that most of the projects, which are critical to the livelihood of Ogoni people, are at critical stages of either 90% or 80% completion. I don't think that the Ogoni people have had it as good as this, and so, I want to use this opportunity to congratulate you, on behalf of myself and NESREA. I am also a beneficiary of the projects and programmes that HYPREP has implemented.

"We'll learn from him. We'll continue to see how we can learn from what he's doing, particularly, in NESREA. But beyond that also, it is to say that I want to also use this opportunity to congratulate the Minister, without whom everything we are talking about today wouldn't have come to pass. And I think that is why it's important that we continuously appreciate the Minister for all that he has done", he said.

Prof. Barikor also informed the Minister that the Ogoni people appreciate good things and anyone who contributes to who they are, and that they will continue to have his name on the marble of these communities and indeed Ogoni for the support he has given to the Project.

The NESREA Boss thanked the Ogoni people for the cooperation they have exhibited over the period, reminding them that the projects are their own, and they must commit themselves to protecting them.

"I think that time has passed when government will establish projects and communities will not protect them. I am confident in the leadership of Bodo community in protecting what we are here for today. Let me again congratulate my brother, the Project Coordinator, Prof. Zabbey and staff of HYPREP for all your commitment and support given to him. If you continue this way, the sky will be a stepping stone," the NESREA helmsman said.

Similarly, a former Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment, Chief Kenneth Kobani in his goodwill message, lauded the Honourable Minister of Environment and the Project Coordinator on what he described as a great feat in a short period.

He said, "Little did we know that within a very short period we would see so much progress. We must give credit to President Buhari, whose government fast tracked what now become HYPREP and the benefits we're seeing today. The people of Bodo are particularly pleased because this is one of the most devastated communities.

"Honourable Minister, when you put a square peg in a square hole, you

Gokana Area Office Built by HYPREP

get good success. The moment a son of the soil, who knows his onions was put in charge, you look at the speed at which things have happened. Today, you look around and people seem to forget that these magnificent and great projects that they talk about have happened because people who care and are dedicated to their work and have decided to say never again will Ogoni and indeed Bodo, go through this desolation, are in charge", he noted.

The former Commissioner for Finance in Rivers State noted that the commissioning is clearly an affirmation of what President Tinubu is set out to do in the Renewed Hope Agenda, adding that Ogoni is beginning to climb back to where it ought to be, with HYPREP playing key role in ensuring that the environmental problems are being ameliorated.

A former President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, Legborsi Pyagbara said the HYPREP project stands as a testament to the collective struggle of the Ogoni people and thanked the Project Coordinator who he said was part of the struggle as a university student that campaigned for the realization of the ideals of the Ogoni struggle.

"I think remarkable progress has been made. Prof. Zabbey knows what it is, and he is doing well. We thank the Minister for giving him all the support, without which we will not be where we are today. We thank the generality of the Ogoni people. We struggled and today, we are setting the pace for environmental governance, and what is called Environmentalism, not just in Nigeria but in the whole world," he said.

In like manner, the Gberemene of Tai Kingdom, HRM, King Samuel Nnee said the Ogoni traditional institution is happy with the efforts of the Minister, as well as the Project Coordinator, and that they are seeing what is on ground in terms of development in the communities.

In his words, "as traditional rulers of Ogoni, we want to say that our son, the Project Coordinator is doing a great work here. He has our support; everybody knows he will do what you have asked him to do. All we're asking is that the government should continue to support HYPREP, because there is a lot to be done, and as Ogoni people, at any point in time, we will support every good effort of government. We're indeed, happy because we are seeing good handwriting on the wall."

Immediately after the water commissioning in Bodo, the Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal and his entourage proceeded to Gokana Local Government Secretariat where he commissioned the HYPREP Area Office for Gokana to bridge the gap between the grassroots and the Project Coordination Office in Port Harcourt.

HYPREP WATER PROJECT WILL CURB RURAL-URBAN DRIFT – *Bodo Monarch*

The Paramount Ruler of Bodo City in Gokana Local Government Area, HRH, King John Bari-iyedum Berebon, Gberedeela VIII has described as historic the completion and commissioning of the HYPREP Water Project in the town with reticulation community wide, saying that the development will help in curbing mass movement of people from the rural to urban areas in search of better living condition and means of livelihood.

King John Bari-iyedum Berebon stated this at his Palace in Bodo while addressing the Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal and his entourage, during a courtesy call preceding the commissioning of the Bodo water project.

King Berebon and his Council of Chiefs and Elders who warmly received the Honourable Minister, Lawal; the Project Coordinator of HYPREP, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey; the Managing Director and Chief Executive of Renaissance Africa Energy Company, Engr. Tony Attah who was represented by the General Manager, Relations and Sustainable Development, Igo Weli; the Director, Technical Services, HYPREP, Prof. Damian Paul- Aguiyi, and others, expressed gratitude over the completion of the water project in the community that had been so adversely affected by decades of oil exploration and associated environmental problems.

The King, in his welcome address, said, "commissioning the multi-million-naira HYPREP water project carefully crafted to meet the regulatory and approved standard required by the World Health Organization; for our dear community to make potable water available to our people is historic and makes us stand." He believed that the provision of potable water will eradicate the prevalence of waterborne diseases in

the community and its suburbs, and that without water, life would be difficult to live. "Its therapeutic characteristic is second to none and usefulness uncountable, from industrial to domestic use. That is the significance of this facility you commissioned today, and we are delighted.

"We will reiterate like Oliver Twist, that we are also desirous of other community-based life impacting projects to ameliorate the suffering of our people, who had been so adversely affected by decades of oil exploration and its associated environmental degradation with disease prone effects in the Ogoni communities and indeed the Niger Delta area. The provision of people-centered projects in the area will also assist to curb rural-urban drift," he said.

While declaring their unalloyed support for the President Tinubu's administration, King Berebon said "the people of Bodo community are happy with the President for the appointment of our illustrious son, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey a bona fide citizen of Bodo City, and we assure him our unalloyed support as the Project Coordinator for him to succeed in piloting the affairs of HYPREP."

King Berebon used the occasion of the courtesy call to confer on the Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, the chieftaincy title of, "*Mene Silebatom,*" meaning the King who does good works.

Environment Minister, Lawal at the Palace of the Paramount Ruler of Bodo City

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND DEEPENS TALKS ON PARTNERSHIP WITH HYPREP

As a follow-up to an earlier meeting held in May at the Project Coordination Office of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in Port Harcourt, the Project Coordinator, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey has held another round of discussion with the Irish Ambassador to Nigeria, His Excellency, Mr. Peter Ryan at the Irish Embassy in Abuja.

Deliberations by both nationals focused on partnership and collaboration as well as the sustainability of HYPREP projects and programmes in Ogoni especially the operationalization of the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration that is now at 90% completion.

At the meeting in May, the Irish Ambassador to Nigeria, His Excellency, Mr. Peter Ryan had stated that the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration has huge potentials and impacts and should be utilized and owned by the communities as proposed.

His impression about HYPREP had followed what he observed as a visible transformation of the lives and landscape of the Ogoni people through the various environmental and human capital development projects of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in land remediation, shoreline and mangrove

restoration, livelihood trainings and construction of legacy projects.

The Irish Ambassador had also expressed his admiration at the outstanding performance of the Project Coordinator of HYPREP, Professor Nenibarini Zabbey and stated that the success recorded was rooted in his love for the Ogoni people and pledged his country's commitment to the effective implementation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report on Ogoni.

The partnership with HYPREP, Ryan had revealed, was to strengthen the good relationship between the people of Ireland and Nigeria.

HYPREP PC, Prof. Zabbey Presents a Copy of HYPREP Herald to Irish Ambassador, Peter Ryan during his Visit to Irish Embassy in Abuja

OGONI CLEAN-UP: NUJ APPLAUDS HYPREP ON EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has commended the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project on what it considers effective implementation of the United Nations Environment Programme Report on Ogoniland.

The NUJ in its communique at the end of Zone F, (South-South) Executive Council Meeting in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, applauded HYPREP for successfully carrying out series of livelihood programmes, remediation of oil impacted sites, provision of potable water and construction of legacy projects in Ogoni.

The Executive members of South-South Council of the Union - the umbrella body for all registered professional journalists in Nigeria said following their tour of the HYPREP facilities in Ogoniland, they are impressed with what they saw on ground, which shows commitment and positive strides by HYPREP in the delivery of its mandate.

In the communique jointly signed by Comrade Nsibiet John, Chairman, Communique Drafting Committee; Dr. Ijeoma Tubosia, Secretary; Comrade Josephine Omodior; Comrade John Angese, Zonal Secretary; and Comrade Opaka Dokubo, Zonal Vice President, they urged the Federal Government of Nigeria to extend the interventions in Ogoni to other parts of the Niger Delta region that are devastated by hydrocarbon pollution.

The meeting had in attendance chairmen, secretaries and other executive members of the NUJ in all the South-South States.

Earlier, while on a tour of HYPREP project sites in Ogoni, the Zonal Vice President of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Zone F, Comrade Opaka Dokubo, had commended the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) on its efforts in cleaning up the Ogoni environment and providing sustainable livelihoods to the people.

Comrade Dokubo lauded the management of HYPREP for the milestones achieved in land and shoreline remediation, mangrove restoration, provision of potable water to about 40 Ogoni communities, livelihood and human capital development, and the construction of legacy infrastructure, such as the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration, the

Ogoni Power Project, and the Ogoni Specialist Hospital.

"There is so much to commend HYPREP for, and indeed, so much to commend the Federal Government for what we have seen here. HYPREP is doing diligent work, and we are satisfied that real progress is being made. As it stands, nothing is left out in this project," he stated.

While acknowledging the progress made, Comrade Dokubo urged the Federal Government to sustain the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on Ogoniland as well as replicate same in other Niger Delta states affected by hydrocarbon pollution.

Sites visited during the tour included the Mangrove Restoration site in Bomu community in Gokana Local Government Area, Kporghor/Gio Water Scheme, the Ogoni Specialist Hospital, Kpite community in Tai Local Government Area, the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration, Wiiyaakara, in Khana Local Government Area and Lot 3 land and ground water remediation site in Ogale, Eleme Local Government Area.

NUJ South-South Exco Members at Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration, Wiiyaakara

While welcoming the NUJ officials to the HYPREP Project Coordination Office in Port Harcourt, the Director, Technical Services, Prof. Damian-Paul Aguiyi who represented the Project Coordinator, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey encouraged journalists to be objective in their reporting of the Project and offering constructive criticism to help improve Project delivery.

Also, the Head of Communications, HYPREP, Dr. Enuolare Mba-Nwigoh highlighted the positive outcomes of the Project to include biodiversity recovery, planting of over 1.4 million mangrove seedlings, medical outreaches and interventions, and robust community-based engagement.

NDDC SEEKS COLLABORATION WITH HYPREP ON NYPA PALM UTILIZATION

Conscious of the economic benefits and the underutilization of Nipa palms in the creeks of the Niger Delta, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has sought collaboration with the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), in the effective exploitation of nipa palm for the improvement of livelihoods, capacity building, job creation and value addition to Niger Delta communities.

The initiative was unveiled during the visit of the Director, Environmental Protection and Control, NDDC, Dr. Henry Asuquo Okokon to the HYPREP Coordination Office in Port Harcourt, during which they had robust discussions on collaborative actions aimed at achieving effective biodiversity and livelihoods restoration through sustainable use of nipa palms in the region.

Dr. Okokon said during their previous visit to HYPREP mangrove restoration sites, they found out that the Project was doing well, and that was one of the reasons they came seeking for collaboration with HYPREP in other areas.

He stated that NDDC seeks to collaborate with HYPREP on the pilot project for processing nipa palm into ethanol. "This is very important to us because it will help ensure that we have jobs to give out and will engage the youths of the area. The other area is women empowerment through nipa palm, which will help the women do household crafts. The women too will have something to do. It will

HYPREP PC, Prof. Zabbey in a Group Photograph with Staff of NDDC and HYPREP

encourage them and ensure that they have activities to carry out."

The NDDC Director added that the collaboration also seeks the establishment of a micro media demonstration site and capacity building, believing that if the two entities collaborate in these areas, it will add value to the region and engage the youths, take people out of unemployment and prevent social vices in the region.

The Project Coordinator of HYPREP, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey who expressed delight at the visit, thanked the NDDC management for conceiving such initiative, and for appreciating what HYPREP is doing. Prof. Zabbey said the partnership would enable the organizations brainstorm and put together ideas that will advance sustainable development in the region, noting that it should be supported with innovative research to identify other areas for the effective utilization of nipa palm.

He emphasized that the engagement should not be a one-off meeting but that in the coming days, both organizations should hold technical sessions to work out the effectiveness of the engagement and consider appropriate actions for the success of the initiative, adding that such collaboration should lead to sustainable development of the region.

Prof. Zabbey further stressed the need for the creation of a sustainable template for the cleanup of other areas. "As you can see, the restoration project is multi species and community driven. We will leave behind a sustainable learning legacy. We need to support the collaboration with innovative research, and we should not narrow it to production of ethanol, even as we revive research on nipa palm."

He also noted that there is need to look at the issues of carbon stock and carbon credit in considering sustainable solutions to livelihoods and environmental problems and used the opportunity to enumerate sundry successes made on the Project. While explaining the introduction of nipa palm into the Niger Delta region in 1906, the Project Coordinator said Nypa palm *(nipa fruticans)* is an invasive species causing widespread ecological damage in the Niger Delta, threatening native mangroves and disrupting ecosystem balance.

Meanwhile, HYPREP, through its Mangrove Restoration Programme is addressing the invasion of nipa palms in the creeks of Ogoni, where over one ton of nipa palms has been removed from the Bomu Creek. This is to allow for the natural re-establishment and growth of indigenous mangrove species, revive aquatic ecosystems, restore biodiversity and support the livelihood of local communities.

Prof. Damian-Paul Aguiyi, Director, Technical Services of HYPREP and other senior staff of both HYPREP and the NDDC were at the meeting.

FACILITIES AT BODO WATER STATION

FACILITIES AT TAABAA WATER STATION

FACILITIES AT ETEO WATER STATION

FACILITIES AT UEGWURE-BOUE WATER STATION

HYPREP INCREASES POST-GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP SLOTS TO 500

The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) has responded to the growing applications by post graduate students of Ogoni extraction by increasing its Post-Graduate Scholarship slots from 300 to 500 for students doing their Masters and Ph.D programmes.

The Project Coordinator of HYPREP, Professor Nenibarini Zabbey made this known in Port Harcourt at the sensitization workshop for the commencement of the 2025 HYPREP Post-Graduate Scholarship Scheme assuring that the process will be based on fairness and merit.

Prof. Zabbey

Prof. Zabbey urged prospective beneficiaries to utilize the grant wisely by channeling it into research and enhancing their careers.

“You must run the race to earn it, as this scholarship grant is an investment in the brilliance, research, and aspirations of Ogoni youths. It is designed to promote excellence, support researches, and recognize merit," he stressed.

The Project Coordinator reiterated HYPREP's continuous commitment to invest in young people as the future of Ogoni lies in their hands, adding that through the scholarship programme among other interventions, the Project is working to restore livelihoods, build capacity and ensure the full implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Environment Programme Report.

Describing the youths as the greatest beneficiaries of HYPREP's projects and programmes, Prof. Zabbey encouraged them to continue to champion the values of peace, education and unity, which he said are essential to secure the future of Ogoni and ensure lasting development.

He called on all Ogonis, including the postgraduate students, to continue to create a conducive environment that ensures the goals of HYPREP are fully realized.

“In line with our civic responsibility, we must embrace collaboration and constructive engagements so that the Ogoni cleanup and all its attendant benefits can reach every corner of Ogoniland - from the seafood market in Kaa (Khana, LGA), to the lush green farmlands of Korokoro (Tai LGA), from the streets of Akpajo (Eleme LGA), to the fisher folk in Bodo (Gokana LGA). We must act to promote common good.

“All beneficiaries and stakeholders need to understand that processes and procedures form the backbone of HYPREP's operations. As a Federal Government Project, we remain committed to adhering to existing rules and regulations. We urge everyone to approach these processes with seriousness and patience.

"I would like to discourage the culture of negative comments, especially when there are perceived delays in processes. Instead, I encourage you to direct your questions through the established channels for public engagement. The Project Coordination Office remains open to enquiries, and we are always ready to guide all stakeholders," Prof. Zabbey stated.

In his keynote address, Dr. Sorbarikor Lebura, Reader, Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship, Department of Business Administration of the Rivers State University, urged the prospective beneficiaries to see the scholarship as a seed to be invested in their academic pursuit as intended.

Similarly, Mr. Edward Baa, Managing Director, Pa-Ed Multilinks Consulting, reeled out the criteria for eligibility and informed that the portal, accessible on the HYPREP website (www.hyprep.gov.ng) will

Cross Section of Participants at the Post-Graduate Scholarship Sensitization Workshop

open from Friday, August 29, 2025, at 6:00pm (GMT) to September 12, 2025, by 6pm.

He further clarified that only those not older than 45years are qualified to apply for the scholarship for Masters degree, while 55years is the ceiling for PhD programme. Other requirements include letter of Admission from the School of Post Graduate Studies, Local Government Letter of Identification, Letter of recognition from the Community Development Committee Chairman or any highly placed community leader or personality, especially, in public service. No transcript, he said, is required for the application.

In her speech, the Head, Sustainable Livelihoods, HYPREP, Mrs. Josephine Nzidee cautioned against diverting the grant to other personal issues, expressing disappointment with some reports received from certain beneficiaries of the first phase of the scholarship programme who misused the grant rather than using it for the school programme.

Mrs. Nzidee explained that though application for the grant is easy, but the selection process will be rigorous because of the swelling number of applications, reassuring that the selection will be devoid of compromise and man-know-man syndrome.

The sensitization workshop had postgraduate students from the four Local Government Areas of Ogoni in attendance.

100 OGONI YOUTHS COMPLETE HYPREP CREATIVE ARTS TRAINING

-Prof. Zabbey Urges Graduands to Utilize Skills for Societal Dev.

The Project Coordinator of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey has admonished beneficiaries of the HYPREP Creative Arts Training Programme to use the talent acquired for their personal benefit and societal development.

The HYPREP Project Coordinator gave the admonition at the close-out ceremony for the one hundred (100) Ogoni youths trained in script writing, film production techniques and acting held at the University of Port Harcourt, noting that the training was a deliberate step to empower young people who aspire to make their mark in the creative and entertainment industry.

Prof. Zabbey explained that the Creative Arts Training in addition to other skill acquisition programmes and interventions, was part of HYPREP's sustained efforts to create alternative sources of livelihood and said that the choice of the University of Port Harcourt was strategic, as it supports learning, adding that targeted

capacity building for Ogoni youths and women remains a central strategy in HYPPEP's livelihood restoration and improvement efforts.

He further posited that HYPREP's goal is to reach every part of the Ogoni community and ensure that no group or talent pool is left behind, and that the training was designed to respond to the aspirations of many of the young people who desire to pursue careers in acting, filmmaking, content creation, and other branches of the entertainment sector.

"At HYPREP, we believe that this is a crucial avenue to positively influence society. The skills you have acquired are springboards to enter the creative industry, earn a living, and become entrepreneurs in your own right. Use it to open new doors of opportunity for yourself and your community.

"Dear trainees, we are particularly pleased to know that as part of your training, you have successfully put together short films that will be premiered during the ceremony. It is an impressive accomplishment, demonstrating your creativity and determination," Prof. Zabbey said.

While commending the graduands on the milestone achievement, he encouraged them to continue making films and producing content that can stand proudly on any stage, hinting that in today's digital age, the role of social media in the creative arts cannot be overstated, as it is not only a platform for entertainment but also a powerful tool for advocacy, education, and social change.

"I encourage you to utilize your skills and these platforms to promote civic responsibility, peace, and environmental sustainability as you showcase your talents to the world.

"The world is listening, and it is your duty as young people to ensure that Ogoni is heard in the right way. You also have to speak for HYPREP and highlight the progress being made in implementing the recommendations of the UNEP Report," Prof. Zabbey appealed.

He assured the youths that the Project Coordination office will continue to engage all project stakeholders, provide periodic updates to keep them informed of the progress HYPREP has made, challenges encountered and its strategic plans.

The Project Coordinator particularly thanked key contributors to the success of the training, which includes the Director, Technical Services, HYPREP, Prof. Damian-Paul Aguiyi, the Head, Livelihood Unit, Mrs. Josephine Nzidee, the trainers and the Head of Department of Theatre Arts/Films Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Dr. Ovunda Ihunwo.

While giving an overview of the

HYPREP PC, Prof. Zabbey with Creative Arts Trainees and their Trainers during the Graduation Ceremony Held at University of Port Harcourt

training, the Head, Livelihoods Unit, Mrs. Josephine Nzidee explained that out of 5000 applications received, 100 persons met the required standards after due auditioning and screening by renowned Nollywood actors engaged by HYPREP.

Mrs. Nzidee said four short films have been produced by the trainees and commended them on their outstanding performance.

The Head, Department of Theatre/Films Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Dr. Ovunda Ihunwo commended HYPREP on embarking on such laudable and enterprising initiative, saying he saw a team spirit and bright future for the youths during the four months' training.

While asking HYPREP to ensure the trained youths are registered with the Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN), Dr. Ihunwo disclosed that they engaged the services of real professionals to direct the film, assuring that the short films can go places because of the rich content and messages they convey, adding that it is a life-changing opportunity for the people of Ogoni.

"I trust that HYPREP under Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey will go far. This thing that has happened today will become a gigantic tree, because HYPREP recognizes the dynamics of the creative economy," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Ledee Tornwe, thanked HYPREP for empowering them with the skill, assuring that they will explore the opportunity given to them to be good ambassadors of Ogoni by projecting its rich cultural heritage and economic opportunities that abound in the area.

The event featured presentation of certificates to graduands and special dance by the youths and the Project Coordinator, Prof. Zabbey which was a demonstration of excitement for the success of the programme.

BIODIVERSITY RECOVERY: HYPREP SETS UP BLOODY COCKLE CULTURE BEDS

The Project Coordinator of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), Prof Nenibarini Zabbey has led a team of officials of the Project to set up culture beds on the tidal flat in Bomu community for the rehabilitation of the West African bloody cockle as part of efforts by HYPREP to recover biodiversity.

This follows the successful planting of over one million four hundred thousand mangrove seedlings in Bomu under HYPREP's mangrove restoration project and the artificial breeding and restocking programme for bloody cockle.

HYPREP Team Setting up Culture Bed for Bloody Cockles at Bomu Creek

The Bloody Cockle Progarmme is being carried out in collaboration with experts from the University of Port Harcourt, the Rivers State University, and the African Regional Aquaculture Centre (ARAC) of the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR) at the NIOMR Brackishwater Station in Buguma, Rivers State aimed at restoring the bloody cockle in Ogoni. Bloody cockles became locally extinct in the area due to oil pollution and other human activities.

Prof. Zabbey is optimistic that having recorded significant success in the shoreline and mangrove restoration projects, the wild culture initiative will help in the natural reproduction and spread of cockles in the area.

He noted that a co-management between the Project and communities is necessary for the actualization and sustainability of the programme.

Bloody cockles (*Senilla senilis,* kóó in Ogoni local palance) are bivalve molluscs commonly found in muddy

and sandy mud intertidal zones and are vital for sustaining the economy and livelihood of people living in and around coastal communities.

Bloody cockle has a high nutritional value as it is a source of protein and contains high levels of essential amino acids (85-95%).

On the rehabilitated intertidal flat of Bomu community, there are now sightings of shoals of fish fry in pools on the sediment, flocks of sea birds, mud skippers, periwinkles and other aquatic life forms – an indication of biodiversity recovery.

PRESIDENT TINUBU APPOINTS NEW GOVERNING COUNCIL, BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR HYPREP

The Governing Council and the Board of Trustees of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) have been reconstituted.

The reconstitution of both governing structures by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu followed the expiration of the tenure of the former appointees.

The reconstituted Governing Council of HYPREP will be chaired by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal.

The members are Loanyie Barituka Victor, who represents Non-governmental Organizations focused on the environment, Bright Onyebuchi Jacob and Henry Obiabure, who represent Niger Delta communities.

Others are Professor Barinedum Michael Nwibere and Barrister Baride Abdul Gwezia who both represent Ogoni Community on the new Council.

The nine oil-producing states have two representatives on the Council: Gideon Onyebuwa Melfor and Dr Ibikunle Omotehinse. There are four alternative members of the Council, representing Ogoniland and the Niger Delta: Rev. Canon Dr Abraham Olungwe and Engr. Maeba Power Ekpobari are the alternate members of the Council representing Ogoniland. Joseph Akedesuo and Beauty Warejuowei are representing the Niger Delta.

President Tinubu also reconstituted the Board of Trustees of Ogoni Trust Fund having Rt. Hon. Emmanuel Nwiika Deeyah as Chairman.

Members of the Board are Fred Mbombo Igwe and Dr. Fred Barivule Kpakol who represent Ogoni communities and stakeholders on the board. Mrs. Dorcas Amos represents the other Niger Delta communities, while Chief Jide Damazio, who was reappointed, represents Non-Governmental Organizations dealing with environmental issues.

The Governing Council has some permanent representations being the serving Minister of Regional Planning, Minister of Budget and National Planning, Renaissance African Energy Company, Office of the National Security Adviser, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The Board of Trustees also has permanent members being the serving Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Environment, Minister of State, Petroleum Resources, Renaissance African Energy Company and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

FEATURE

HYPREP IS ON COURSE TO FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF UNEP REPORT ON OGONI

By: Enuolare Mba-Nwigoh

On August 4, 2011, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released its report on the Environmental Assessment of Ogoni.

The report detailed the devastating effects of hydrocarbon pollution on the environment and the livelihoods of the people, necessitating a wide range of recommendations for the remediation and restoration of livelihoods of impacted communities.

The report was submitted to the Federal Government of Nigeria for implementation, and it accordingly set up the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) to drive the implementation process. This bold step signalled the Federal government's commitment to addressing decades of environmental concerns in Ogoni and by extension the Niger Delta.

Fourteen years after the release of the UNEP report and the subsequent establishment of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), a ray of hope beckons on

the horizon, transforming a once seemingly bleak and despairing situation into one of opportunities, boundless possibilities, and a reassuring future for the communities and posterity.

The implementation of the UNEP report's recommendations by HYPREP has made its spirit and letter a reality, expressing and interpreting its tenets in ways that place the people at the core of the environmental remediation and restoration of its livelihood efforts.

Today, through the thematic areas drawn from its two cardinal mandates of environmental remediation and livelihood restoration, HYPREP has recorded tremendous successes in soil and groundwater remediation, shoreline cleanup and mangrove restoration, provision of potable water, public health interventions, construction of the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration (CEER), the Ogoni Power Project (OPP), the Ogoni Specialist Hospital and Buan Cottage Hospital and sustainable livelihoods.

We are pleased to confirm that we are on track in our quest to fulfil the Project's core objectives. This is evident in the scorecard so far. In remediation, we have completed and obtained NOSDRA's closeout certification for 50 Lots in the Simple-Risk sites. The ongoing remediation of medium-risk complex sites, involving remediation of contaminated soil and groundwater, is 38% complete. The phase 1 shoreline cleanup and mangrove restoration stand at 56% and 93% completed, respectively.

Similarly, notable achievements have been recorded in the construction of the CEER, which is currently at 90%. Additionally, Ogoni Specialist Hospital and Buan Cottage Hospital are at 86% and 98% complete, respectively. The provision of potable water has gained momentum, with 40 communities already having access to water. Phase 1 of the Ogoni Power Project is over 40% complete, while more than 5,000 Ogoni youths and women have been trained in 20 skill sets.

With over 7,000 direct jobs created, the Ogoni cleanup programme is revolutionising the socio-economic landscape of the region, empowering people and families, contributing to peacebuilding and security, and improving the Human Development Index (HDI), while aligning with almost all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

More of these achievements were chronicled in the Project Scorecard presented by the Project Coordinator, Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey, to Ogoni Stakeholders on June 26, 2025.

The dedication and dexterity deployed by previous leaders have taken the Project this far. Still, it is the innovation, inclusivity and a bottom-top approach to programme conceptualisation and implementation, proactive and strategic paradigms of Professor Nenibarini Zabbey, the Project Coordinator of HYPREP, under the supervision of the Hon. Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, that have buoyed efforts to deliver a people-centred, sustainable and fit-for-purpose cleanup programme in Ogoni.

In demonstrating a greater commitment to the swift implementation of the UNEP Report, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, under the Renewed Hope Agenda, has prioritised the Ogoni Cleanup through the Presidential Directive. The directive prioritises the remediation of the environment and ensures that the Ogoni people benefit from the cleanup efforts.

We are further encouraged by the fact that the Ogoni people are benefiting from the full range of deliverables from the various projects and are active participants, working closely with HYPREP for effective project delivery.

Furthermore, we are particularly interested in sustaining these gains. This is why we are building collaborative partnerships across strata, including the development of technical and administrative frameworks to achieve a sustainable cleanup programme.

We are also mindful of the daunting public expectations from stakeholders, both within and outside Nigeria, and pledge our commitment to developing knowledge products and legacies that will be useful for the restoration of land and the protection of posterity.

Finally, community support remains the life wire of the Ogoni cleanup project. As we look forward to covering more ground, HYPREP remains grateful to the tremendous support it has received from governments, the diplomatic community, the Ogoni people, and other stakeholders, and kindly implore that this support be maintained. Communities should continue to provide a congenial atmosphere for Project activities, protect the facilities and desist from acts that would re-pollute the environment.

OGONI CLEANUP CLOSE-UP

By: Femi Macaulay

It is said that it is easier to destroy than to build or rebuild. This context underscores the actions of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) aimed at rebuilding Ogoni, Rivers State, an environment devastated by oil industry operations. Oil was discovered in commercial quantity in Ogoniland in 1958.

Today, it comprises four local government areas, Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme, and includes 261 communities. Ironically, the discovery of oil in the place, which made it a source of wealth for Nigeria, also brought tragic consequences. For instance, between 1976 and 1991, a period of 15 years, nearly 3,000 separate oil spills polluted Ogoniland, negatively impacting farming and fishing as well as the health of the locals. Indeed, the issue of environmental degradation and its damaging effects inspired the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), in 1990. The organisation, led by writer and environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, raised public awareness of the dark side of oil exploration and production in the country; and its potent campaign helped to force Shell to suspend production in Ogoniland in 1993.

Two years later, Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni human rights activists were executed under Nigeria's military government, which accused them of the murder of four fellow Ogonis over differences regarding the appropriate approach to the fight against the destruction of their environment. Notably, in 2008, two massive oil spills happened in the Bodo community, and Shell attributed them to defects in the Trans-Niger Pipeline. In the first case, the leak lasted about four weeks. In 2009, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), prompted by the Nigerian government, launched a scientific investigation into the impact of contamination from oil across the Ogoni region. UNEP, in 2011, published a report showing that pollution from over 50 years of oil operations in the region had "penetrated further and deeper than many may have supposed."

According to UNEP, its team, over a 14-month period, "examined more than 200 locations, surveyed 122 kilometres of pipeline rights of way, reviewed more than 5,000 medical records and engaged over 23,000 people at local community meetings." Also, detailed soil and groundwater contamination investigations were conducted at 69 sites, and more than 4,000 samples were analysed, including water taken from 142 groundwater monitoring wells drilled specifically for the study and soil extracted from 780 boreholes.

It said the findings were "alarming both in terms of human health protection and environmental protection." For instance, in one community, at Nisisioken Ogale, in western Ogoniland, the report said families were drinking water from wells contaminated with benzene – a known carcinogen – at levels over 900 times above World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines. UNEP concluded that "The environmental restoration of Ogoniland could prove to be the world's most wide-ranging and long-term oil cleanup exercise ever undertaken if contaminated drinking water, land, creeks and important ecosystems such as mangroves are to be brought back to full, productive health."

This gave birth to the Ogoni Cleanup, launched by the Nigerian government in 2016. HYPREP, which operates under the Federal Ministry of Environment, has the mandate to "remediate hydrocarbon impacted communities and restore livelihoods in Ogoniland," based on the 2011 UNEP report on Ogoni Environmental Assessment. HYREP was established in 2012 and commenced operations in Ogoniland in 2016.

My participation in a tour of remediation projects addressing the negative impact of oil operations in Ogoniland was an eye-opening experience. The tour, organised by Media Voices for Accountability (MVA), involved seasoned journalists and supported a narrative change. Headed by Dr. Dakuku Peterside, MVA works to "promote transparency, accountability and dialogue in public affairs." There was strong evidence of HYPREP's focused improvement of impacted communities as well as its commitment to sustainable development in the targeted areas.

The beauty of HYPREP is its value additions beyond UNEP'S recommendations. For instance, we visited the Kporghor/Gio and Barako water schemes, which boast modern water treatment facilities that provide potable water to communities. We also visited the 100-bed Ogoni Specialist Hospital and the 40-bed Buan Cottage Hospital, which are nearing completion.

The high point of the tour was the

Visiting Senior Journalists at Bomu Mangrove Restoration Project Site

visit to the grand and ambitious Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration (CEER), which is in the last phase of completion. It stands on 28 hectares of land. Designed as an international research centre for environmental issues, it is a statement on continuity of environmental intervention. It is created "to promote learning and benefit other communities impacted by oil contamination in the Niger Delta and elsewhere in the world." These project sites, seen on the first day of the tour, provided valuable insights into HYPREP's impressive and commendable efforts.

On the second day of the tour, an adventure-filled boat ride to see the results of the mangrove restoration project earned HYPREP more praise. At the Bomu site, in Gokana Local Government Area, it was a delight to see "juvenile mangroves" growing in restored areas. This was an instance of success. The cleanup objective at this site, which is to allow the reintroduction of mangrove, had been achieved. In a symbolic demonstration of support for the cause, the group of visiting journalists participated in a mangrove planting session.

The stench of contamination was unmistakable at the Kpor site, one of the 34 shoreline remediation sites across five communities in Gokana. Evidence of the devastating effect of oil spillage and leakage could be seen at the shoreline at Goi. The water was unrecognizable. Vegetation had disappeared. Biodiversity was destroyed. Remediation workers struggled to clean up impacted areas, working with machines, shovels and water hoses. It was a dark picture.

Soil and groundwater treatment schemes at Ajeokpori, Ogale, Eleme Local Government Area, told a similar story of contamination resulting from oil operations in Ogoniland. Mountains of excavated soil and vast pits punctuated the site. The removal of contaminants and restoration of the soil is to ensure revegetation. This had been achieved at the Obolo Ebubu site, among others. The visiting journalists saw evidence of soil remediation at this site.

The UNEP report recommended a $1billion Environmental Restoration Fund for Ogoniland or Ogoni Restoration Fund (ORF) to be co-funded by the Federal Government, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Ltd and the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) Ltd Joint Venture.

The initial capital injection is to cover the first five years of the clean-up project. According to the report, contaminated land areas in Ogoniland can be cleaned up within five years, while the restoration of heavily impacted mangrove stands and swamp lands will take up to 30 years. HYPREP should be backed to sustain the ongoing remediation efforts.

The tour showed that the organization is living up to its responsibility and is on course regarding its mission in Ogoniland: 'Remediating the environment and restoring livelihood.'

HYPREP Project Coordinator Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey described the project as "the first of its kind in this part of the world," adding that it is "work in progress." During his interaction with the visitors at the organisation's corporate office in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, he observed that "When the public is not properly informed, they will be misinformed and misled." That was the essence of the tour.

PICTURES OF THE MONTH

Environment Minister, Lawal with Bodo Council of Chiefs and Elders

Cross Section of Stakeholders at the Commissioning of Bodo Water Project

Gbenemene Tai, HRM King Samuel Nnee at the Commissioning of Bodo Water Project

DG NESREA, Prof. Innocent Barikor at the Commissioning of Bodo Water Project

Former MOSOP President, Legborsi Pyagbara at the Commissioning of Bodo Water Project

Some Senior Members of Weekly Watch/Weekly Star/HYPREP Herald Chapel

A Periwinkle Picker Displaying her Harvest at Bomu Creek - an Indication of Biodiversity Recovery Following HYPREP's Shoreline Clean-up and Mangrove Restoration Efforts

Prof. Zabbey Presents Certificate to a Graduand of HYPREP Creative Arts Training

OGONI CLEAN-UP ...HYPREP SPEARHEADING MANGROVE RESTORATION

POETRY CORNER

FIRE IN THE SKY

A tongue of flame on steel it sways,
By night it turns the dark to day,
A ghostly torch the oilmen raise
The earth burns silently away.

The jungle sighs beneath the glare,
Its breath is thick with smoke and soot,
No stars can pierce the toxic air,
Where crops now blacken at the root.

Children cough where rivers shine
With sheen no fish would dare to breach,
The village hears no warning sign
Just heat, and hush, and ash in speech.

Yet still it burns, that steady flame,
A profit's whisper in the haze;
And no one asks the fire's name,
Or counts the cost it claims in days.

Editorial Crew

Prof. Nenibarini Zabbey	Publisher-in-Chief
Kpoobari Nafo	Editor
Enuolare Mba-Nwigoh	Head Reportorial
Sunday Zorva	Senior Correspondent
Faith Deekor	Reporter
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Clara Azubuike	Reporter
Erezi Lawrence	Reporter (NYSC)
Confidence Boms	Reporter (Intern)
Tombari Naadue	Camera
Godwin Norbana	Camera
Lekue Akpo	Camera

Photo:HYPREP

THE ENVIRONMENT ON MARBLE

"At first I thought I was fighting to save rubber trees, then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon rainforest. Now I realize I am fighting for humanity."

– Chico Mendes

Photo:HYPREP

... for a cleaner and greener Ogoniland

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All Correspondence to the Editor: #8 Ken Saro-Wiwa Road, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
Email: info@hyprep.gov.ng website: www.hyprep.gov.ng twitter: @HYPREPNigeria