

As noted by farmer Margaret Amos, “Since 1972, our crop yields have started depreciating. Then, as a young girl, I noticed that our crops such as cocoyam, cassava and plantain grew more luxuriantly and when we harvested them, we got bountiful yields. But all that is now history.”

Oil has been Nigeria’s lifeblood since the late 1950s, when Shell had its first successful oil well in Oloibiri in the Bayelsa State in 1956. Eighty per cent of the country’s wealth is

kilometres of flow lines and 400 kilometres of pipelines. It has 349 drilling sites. At the height of its operations, Shell produced one million barrels of crude oil daily. This figure has been reduced with the attacks of militant groups in the last few years. But given the relative stability in this volatile region, there are prospects that the figure would once more increase.

Yet oil companies have very little to show in terms of its contributions to the

Contamination is quite likely since women usually dry their local staple, kpopko garri near these gas flaring sites. Women’s reproductive health has also been affected, as seen with the rising number of cases of infertility and birth deformities.

derived from oil while 90 per cent of revenues come from oil-related businesses. About 50 per cent of Nigeria’s gross domestic product (GDP), 80 per cent of budgetary revenues and 95 per cent of foreign exchange earnings come from oil that is drilled at the Niger Delta.

Ten per cent of its crude oil is directed to the United States (US). According to the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigeria is the eighth biggest exporter of petroleum in the world.

Shell is the most dominant and oldest players in the industry that also includes big names like Agip, Mobil, Chevron and ELF. In fact, it accounts for half of the total oil production in Nigeria. In both Bayelsa and Rivers states alone, Shell’s seismic lines cover 56,000 kilometres. The company has 7,000



Flaring the Air

Although forbidden by national laws, the burning of unwanted gas continues with Nigeria contributing 23 billion cubic meters out of the 150 to 170 billion cubic meters of gas released in the atmosphere yearly. The latter amount is equivalent to the emissions of vehicles in the United Kingdom, France and Germany combined. Despite the 2005 Nigerian court injunction, Shell still flared 600 million cubic metres of gas in this country. In 2001, the amount it flared equaled to 40 per cent of gas consumption on the entire continent of Africa.

Source: John Donnelly (2007). “Russia top offender in gas-flare emissions: US study uses satellite images for findings.” URL: http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2007/06/21/russia_top_offender_in_gas_flare_emissions/ and Shelltruth.org (nd). “Gas Flaring-Nigeria.” URL: http://www.shelltruth.com/case1_e.html Photo from Shellguilty.com