

**Research and record what Amnesty International is *before reading*.**

<b>Amnesty International</b>	
<b>Agip</b>	
<b>Shell</b>	

### **Nigeria oil firms 'deflect blame for spills', says Amnesty**



**Amnesty International has accused major oil companies, including Shell, of failing to report the true picture of oil spills in Nigeria.**

Amnesty says oil companies often blame oil spills on sabotage in order to get out of paying compensation when in fact old, corroded pipes are the cause.

The report says the process of cleaning up the oil spills is completely unreliable.

Shell said it "firmly rejects accusations with no evidence".

It highlighted the issue of theft of crude oil, which it said "remains the main cause of oil pollution in the Delta".

Oil spills are having an appalling environmental impact on the Niger Delta and they are happening at an alarming rate, says the BBC's Will Ross in Lagos.

## **'Deflecting attention'**

**In its report, Amnesty identifies** a "staggering" 474 spills in 2012 in one area alone, operated by the Nigerian Agip Oil Company. Agip's head of operations, Ciro Pigano, said that Agip paid all compensation due to local communities, according to Nigerian law.

Working with a local human rights group, Amnesty studied the oil spill investigation process in Nigeria over six months.

It claims there is "no legitimate basis" for the oil companies' claims that the vast majority of spills are caused by sabotage and theft.

Members of the local community together with oil company staff and government officials are supposed to investigate oil spills, but Amnesty calls this Joint Investigation Visit (JIV) process "entirely unreliable" because, it says, the companies themselves are the primary investigators and the process is not fair to locals.

It says this means that both the causes and severity of oil spills may therefore be misreported, sometimes meaning affected communities miss out on being paid for damage to their land caused by oil spills.

"Sabotage and theft of oil are serious problems in the Niger Delta," the report acknowledges.

"However, oil companies are overstating the case in an effort to hide from the many oil spills that are due to corrosion and equipment failure. Moreover, securing oil piping systems against such acts is - to a great extent - the responsibility of the oil company."

## **'Criminality to blame'**

Mr Pagano, the head of Agip, accepted that it was a "very serious, complex problem" and called for everyone to work together to solve it.

Shell said it "firmly rejects" the claims. "We seek to bring greater fairness in the oil spill investigation process. It said the JIV process was a federal process the company could not change.

Stolen oil, the report said, costs Nigeria billions of dollars in lost money.

"Co-ordinated action from the industry, government, security forces, civil society and others is needed to end these crimes, which remains the main cause of oil pollution in the Delta today," Amnesty's report said.

Oil companies said they regretted "that some organizations continue to fail to take responsibility for oil spills rather than focusing on creating solutions that bring help and changes".

## **Analysis**

**Will Ross** BBC News, Lagos

When I have met people in the affected communities in the Niger Delta, they have complained that their own input into the oil spill investigation process does not matter and trumped by the word of the oil company, and they also say there is intimidation by the security forces.

What is needed is a strong, independent organization to oversee the investigation because sometimes the oil companies are, to use a sporting analogy, playing the referee in a game in which they are themselves accused of committing fouls.

Partly because of the poverty in the oil-rich Niger Delta, the focus is on the money rather than on what is best for the environment. Some people are willing to cause an oil spill with the aim of gaining money from the funds given to clean up the environment.

There are even cases where employees of a major oil company have tried to bid for a contract to clean up a spill. It is a tragedy but oil spills pay.