



# Community voices for change

## Local advocacy in the Niger Delta

### CASE STUDY 3: NONWA COMMUNITY

This is the third case study in a three-part series looking at how local communities have lobbied for change in the Niger Delta. It looks at how members of Nonwa Community, in the Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State, drew the attention of the Rivers State Ministries of Works and Education to two key development projects. The successful reconstruction of an access road and refurbishment of a school block has impacted lives directly, with traders able to access the community and its young people able to receive their education without interruption by the weather.

### Key outcomes



#### Improved local access

The State Government approved and awarded the contract for the building of a key local access road.



#### School facilities rebuilt

Classrooms and other facilities at a local secondary schools were refurbished.

### The problem

Nonwa community is in the Tai Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State. It is peaceful and fast-growing. The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) reports no pipeline vandalism in Nonwa – a key challenge affecting others parts of the Niger Delta – and the cost of opening a business is lower than in Port Harcourt.

Nonwa community prides itself on this, and in recent years it has seen an influx of visitors and settlers. However, its members struggle with access during the rainy season. From 2015, this was particularly the case, with a key local link road to a neighbouring community, which was



Location of Kpitem community and the Rivers State capital, Port Harcourt, within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

permanently flooded. As a community whose occupation is predominantly farming, this posed a challenge for those who could not get to their farmland.

*'It is difficult to access our farmlands which is prone to flooding during heavy downpour, this leads to low productivity of our farm yields. If there are access roads or small bridges, it would boost productivity because more people would be able to go to their farms'*

*- Justice Maporo, a farmer and CMAG member*

Nonwa's educational facilities were also in a poor state. For example, the classroom block at the Community Secondary School had been unfit for use since 2015, with a leaking roof that later collapsed, and broken windows and doors. The school authority blamed the poor quality of materials used in the original construction, but said it could not address this because of a lack of funds.



*Nonwa's Community Secondary School, pictured here during repairs, was in dire need of renovation*

## The action

As in Ogu and Kpitem, Nonwa has a Community Monitoring and Advocacy Group (CMAG), established in partnership with SDN in 2015. The group, which has 10 members, meets to discuss and take action on local issues. After holding community consultations on their key concerns, the CMAG took action to try and address the problems with the road and school.

Its key piece of work was to write to the Local Government Area office, as well as the Commissioner at the Rivers State Ministry of Works, asking to know why progress had not been made and calling for the reconstruction of the access roads and the renovation of the school building. This request was communicated to the State government, and a team from the Ministry of Works and the Ministry of Education visited Nonwa to inspect the community's concerns. Feedback was given to the community through the Chiefs after they met the government team. SDN has supported the CMAG throughout this process, with frequent visits to Nonwa and coordination meetings with its leadership to discuss how to engage most effectively with government officials.

## The outcome

The State Government approved and awarded the contract for the building of the link to Seefor Nigeria Ltd in July 2017. The road has now been finished, while in addition, the Ministry of Works, through a Special Intervention Project, approved the renovation of the affected block of classrooms at the Community Secondary School. New conveniences were also built to cater for the

children and the staffroom, while the office of the principal and vice principal were given a facelift. With the road and school rebuilt, Nonwa is looking forward to continued growth. In addition, the contribution of the CMAG to these projects has been recognised in the community by the Council of Chiefs. This is significant, as it means that the CMAG has the approval of the main decision-making body for their ideas.

The respect and support of the Chiefs came in recognition of the fact that it was the engagement of the CMAG with the Local Government Council that, in part, prompted a response to what had been persistent problems. Although setting up a CMAG everywhere would not automatically lead to change, having a proactive community group can help facilitate development, as politicians and other duty bearers know that there is an organised community, with clear requests, and



*Nonwa's Community Secondary School, pictured here during repairs, was in dire need of renovation*

a commitment to demanding transparency. The support of the Chiefs has in turn has encouraged young people in the community to support contractors working elsewhere, by providing help when needed, and securing equipment from theft. The CMAG has instilled a culture of service and volunteerism in the community's young people, who in the past have been obstructive, or demanded compensation when new projects are implemented.

*'We are recognised by our Community Head and Chiefs in Council as a group that represents the Community. We will not relent in chasing our duty bearers to ensure development comes to this community'*

*– Collins Ndegwe, Chairman Nonwa CMAG*



*Nonwa's Community Secondary School, pictured here during repairs, was in dire need of renovation*

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