



# Community voices for change

## Local advocacy in the Niger Delta

### CASE STUDY 2: KPITE COMMUNITY

This is the second case study in a three-part series looking at how local communities have lobbied for change in the Niger Delta. This case study explains how members of Kpите Community, in the Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State, drew the attention of the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) to ongoing flooding caused by broken drainage. Shell helped with initial work to rebuild the drainage, and now the Niger Delta Development Commission has taken over. The efforts are continuing to improve local infrastructure.

### Key outcomes



#### **Improved local access**

After drainage work is completed, rain and flooding will not affect community members travelling in and out of town so much



#### **Strengthened community-company relations**

Kpите's Community Monitoring and Advocacy Group engaged positively with a major international oil company on a local development project

### The problem

Kpите community is in the Tai Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State. It experiences flooding during the rainy season, which impedes movement of people and goods in and out of the community. The flooding begins at the junction with the main road leading into the community. The primary school is on this stretch of road, and sometimes the water is so high that children cannot get to school.

For those who live in the area, their compounds can be flooded for days on end. The flooding poses an environmental and health risk. Human waste can end up in the water, which, when stagnant, is also a breeding ground for mosquitoes. The impact is felt by children and adults alike, with community members falling sick and often suffering from malaria.



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

During the rainy season in the middle of 2017, the situation became so bad that livelihoods were affected. For women involved in trade, it became difficult to move their goods because of the flooded roads. Most transport services would drop them off outside the community, with drivers saying that going through the water would cause faults in their vehicles. To mitigate this, vehicles had to take a longer route. This led to inflation in the price of goods, as the cost of transporting them had to be factored in.



*Flooding at the junction leading into the community*

The key problem was the lack of drainage to move water away from where it collects. Although there is piping to allow water to flow under the road, it had collapsed from rust. Indiscriminate disposal of plastic and other material also contributed to increased water run-off. According to a local youth leader:

*"There used to be a maintenance culture where youths organised themselves to clean out drainages in the past, but this is not the case today"*  
- Ngbor Timothy



*The broken piping filled with sand and debris.*

## The action

As in Ogu, Kpite has a Community Monitoring and Advocacy Group (CMAG), initially set up in coordination with SDN in 2015. The group meet to discuss and take action on local issues. Kpite's CMAG has been trained in the use of new media to drive their engagement with stakeholders, and after meeting to discuss the drainage problem the CMAG, put their training to good use.

CMAG members posted photographs of the flooding online, and how it had affected economic growth in the community. This caught the attention of the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SDPC), the major oil company in the area, through a member of its local Cluster Development Board, which works on local community development projects, and its Committee Trust. A letter was written through the Council of Chiefs to SPDC to follow up on their interest, including a photocopy of the community's Village Book, indicating that the drainage problem was a priority for people in Kpite. The Village Book is a manifesto of local development concerns, previously developed on the basis of a community consultation supported by SDN.



SPDC responded in writing to the community's Council of Chiefs, saying they would like to intervene, and requesting that the community choose a credible company that would be contracted to help repair the drainage. The Council of Chiefs in turn consulted with the CMAG, and a local contractor was nominated to handle the work.



Land excavated for new drainage.

## The outcome

The CMAG's advocacy came to fruition when work to rebuild the drainage began in September 2017. The first phase, to survey and excavate the site, and construct a drainage system from the junction leading into the community, was completed in March 2018. The second phase is to extend the drainage system past the market to the town square, as well as reconstruct the piping under the road.

In July 2018, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) then took over the project, and started building drainage on the road from the junction to the town square. This actually followed an initial dispute about whether SPDC or NDDC should implement the project.

At the time, the community predominantly supported the PDP, while the Senator who represented it was from the APC. He wanted NDDC to carry out the project – something which the community initially rejected,

sceptical that accepting such a proposal would mean inviting unwelcome pressure to vote for the APC during an election.



Men at work on the new drainage.

In the end, SPDC was given the go-ahead to carry out the project. But since the first phase has ended, the community has decided to put aside its political differences, and let the development happen for the good of all. NDDC has now taken over from SPDC, and will complete the second phase of the project. Securing these commitments can be challenging, but the Kpite example shows that local communities can organise themselves, make their voices heard, and contribute to change. The key next step in Kpite will be to repair the piping under the road, and community members say that once this is fixed, their problems with flooding should be ended once and for all.

*"... We have made very good progress in advocating for our needs. We never thought it was possible to do the things we do now, but with the knowledge we acquired, we have gained positive results. If anybody had told me that I would directly engage with Shell, I never would have believed. I am very proud to be a channel of development in my community..."*

*- Nordee Buabee, Chairman – Kpite Community Monitoring and Advocacy Group*



Completed drainage construction.



Shell board describing the first phase of drainage works.

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