

- Non-recognition of all undemocratic decrees that rob the peoples/communities of the right to ownership and control of their lives and resources, which were enacted without our participation and consent. These include the Land Use Decree and The Petroleum Decree etc.
- To promote the principle of peaceful coexistence between all the communities despite what they call "the provocative and divisive actions of the Nigerian State, transnational oil companies and their contractors."
- Affirm commitment to joint struggle with the other ethnic nationalities in the Niger delta area for self-determination.

CULTURAL RESISTANCE: A DANCE OF DEATH?

The Ijaw youths gave the Oil companies 31 December 1998 as the date by which they were to cease operations until all issues pertaining to their operations were resolved. Because civil has no coercive power the youths resorted to cultural resistance as a tool for making their point. They embarked on Ogele or dances in the streets of Yenagoa, Kaiama, Peramabiri, Ogbia, etc and were predictably met with guns by the state. As the youths danced violence came. Many were shot while scores were detained, raped or maimed. Till date, Bayelsa State remains a militarised zone.

RESISTANCE

Oilwatch International activists define resistance as "the right of a people to say no and mean it, in defence of our collective environmental and human rights in order to achieve positive change". The adopted method is that of non-violence. In the face of brutal attacks by troops working at the behest of oil corporations such as the American oil company, Chevron, it is not certain for how long communities will adhere to this principle. Chevron's human rights record in Nigeria is abysmal. In the last one year they have caused the murder of two youths at Ilaje, Ondo State (the Parabe platform raid of 28 May 1998) and that of about five persons at Ikeyan/Opia in Warri North Local Government Area on January 4, 1999. Their excuse is that they work in partnership with the State and that it is the duty of the State to provide security. Chevron's preferred place of meeting with the communities is the army barracks. Tells something about their idea of dialogue.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Transnational oil corporations in Nigeria have raised "Community Relations" to mean corruption of segments of the society and the creation of an idle or standby "workforce" which sometimes act as some sort of vigilante groups and distort the local economy. The massive amounts mentioned on the balance sheets do not match the realities on the ground as studies (by the Environmental Rights Action and others) have shown.

ISSUES FOR SUSTAINING CIVIL LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT

The Niger Delta has not always been what it is, or is shown to be, today. The land was once fertile; fishes thickly populated the rivers. The hard working people were rich, healthy and happy.