African Indigenous Foundation For Energy And Sustainable Development (AIFES)

COMMUNITY LED RESEARCH ON LOSS AND DAMAGE IN OGONI

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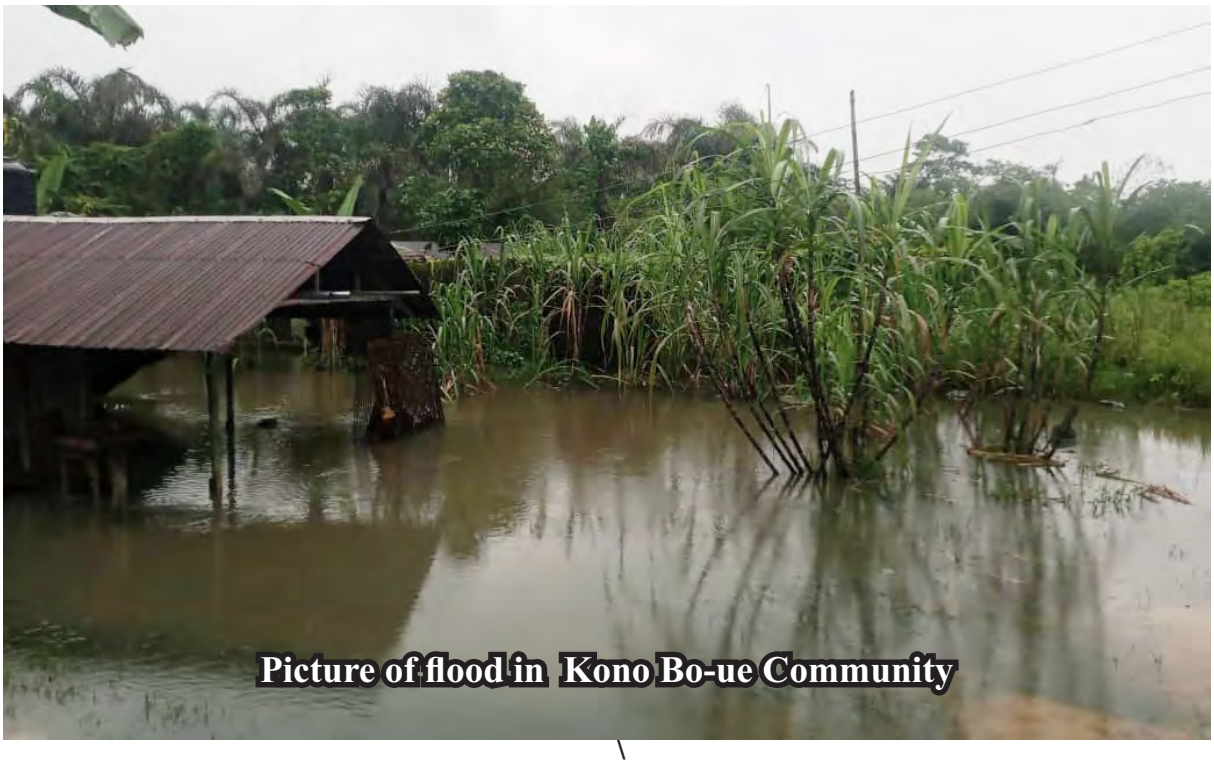
COMMUNITY LED RESEARCH ON LOSS AND DAMAGE
THE OGONI SITUATION

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES



Picture of flood in Kono Bo-ue Community

AFRICAN INDIGENOUS FOUNDATION FOR ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (AIFES)

September, 2025

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The content of this report do not necessarily represent the views of ESCR-NET and no official endorsement of the report or its findings may be inferred.

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Any errors and omissions are solely the responsibility of AIFES.

Legborsi Saro Pyagbara

Executive Director

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1. ABSTRACT

As the world today grapples with the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, the crisis of climate change has led to unparalleled social, economic and environmental effects never before experienced in the world. This climatic crisis has had profound and unsettling consequences on communities particularly Indigenous communities. Some of these climatic effects are such that even adaptation and mitigation measures may not be adequate to prevent the negative impacts on communities.

Hence, climate-induced loss and damage can be referred to as the negative impacts and consequences of climate change that cannot be prevented or fully repaired, leading to loss of lives, loss of livelihoods, destruction of infrastructure, loss of property, health crisis, loss of traditional knowledge etc. These climate disasters occur due to extreme weather conditions conditions and slow-onset events such as floods, sea level-rise, drought and temperature increases.

This Community Led Research examines the impact of loss and damage caused by climate change on the Ogoni Community in Nigeria.

The Ogoni community lies on the South-Eastern fringe of the Niger Delta River and has been the epicenter of the global competition for hydrocarbon exploitation particularly for crude oil with the burning of noxious gases into the atmosphere.

In recent times, the Ogoni community has witnessed a high incidence of floods, loss of pristine biodiversity, unsustainable temperature and erosion of livelihoods. In carrying out the research, the CLR was adopted in order to tap into and build on existing local knowledge and expertise in the community through the effective involvement of community members in the study.

Findings from the research have shown that the impact of loss and damage have implications on the health, agriculture and water systems in Ogoniland particularly from climate disasters like flooding.

The research recommends amongst others that there is the need for intensive education and sensitization of communities on the wide-ranging impacts of climate change including the necessity to design coping mechanisms .

KEYWORDS:
Climate change
Climate Disasters
Adaptation
Mitigation
Cultural Heritage
Biodiversity

2. INTRODUCTION

Community led research (CLR) as a participatory action research (PAR) approach is a conscious and diligent search for knowledge, based on local expertise, by community members actively participating for the benefit and interest of the community. For this study, in dispensing with the traditional method of research and adopting the CLR, we domesticated the process in the various communities, and this gave room for members of the communities to assume and play a central role in the research, having secured their buy-in through proper information. Thus, the community members were highly involved and participated in the design, execution and application of the research outcome. In essence, community members were not just participants or made to be at the receiving end but were leaders in directing the research questions, especially during the focus group discussions (FGDs), gathering the data through distribution and retrieval of questionnaire; involved in the analysis and using the outcome for advocacy and improvement of their living standards, where necessary.

It is an incontrovertible fact that from the interactions, the data generated are specific insights of their everyday living that are grounded in lived experiences. Their local knowledge on real life situations were brought to bear on the research process. This justifies the opinion that inhabitants of the communities who are most affected by the circumstance, whatever-social, economic or environmental challenges are better positioned to understand and attend to them.

Understandably, the CLR is gaining attention because of its ability to mobilize and bring the people together, produce a dependable, relevant and actionable results. This is achieved through the incorporation of local knowledge which reflects real-life experience, produce findings that are more relevant and context specific, generates trust amongst the people, enhance capacity building and empowerment and promotes equity, as well as being action-oriented in the outcomes. Thus, it is not just another research method, but a shift in how it generates knowledge and its use. Additionally, it respects and elevates the voices of those who are often pushed aside in the traditional research domain.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

The research objectives for this study on the impact of climate change on health, agricultural products, water and land resource are;

i. To raise awareness of community members in 5 Ogoni communities about issues of loss and damages
ii. To mobilize members of the five communities to demand for Government action as it concern loss and damage from climate change through official communication as well as press conference by AIFES
iii. To generate data for advocacy to policy makers in government.

The approach for achieving this were through a combination of mixed methods. This involves collection of both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis of

same. Qualitative data, which include interviews, focus group discussion and observation were used to explore experience, perceptions and adaption /coping mechanisms while quantitative data was used through questionnaire surveys and statistical analysis. Having achieved this, it will then be utilized in the various strategies or serve as guide to actions in achieving the objectives of the study.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research focuses on impacts of climate change on loss and damage with specific reference to health, agricultural products and water and land resources in Ogoniland, Nigeria. It took place in 5 communities in 4 Local Government Areas (LGA) of Obolo- Ebubu (Eleme LGA), Korokoro (Tai LGA), Kegbara Dere (Gokana LGA), Buan (Khana LGA) and Kono Boue (Khana LGA). Two communities were particular taken from Khana LGA due to the large size of the LGA. Except Kono Boue, all other communities are located near flare stacks. Kono Boue was chosen because of a devastating flood that ravaged the community sometimes in June, 2024 for the first time in the history of the community and Ogoniland and which made life unbearable for the people. Gas flaring, occasioned by unsustainable oil and gas exploitation has been a major challenge to the Ogoni environment since 1958 when crude oil was first discovered in commercial quantity. Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) has been the major oil company responsible for this incessant gas flaring.

The methodology for the study included questionnaire administration in all the 5 communities (2500 copies/500 per community), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and personal interviews. For the communities, 2 field research assistants, who were from each of the communities making a total of 10 and who led in the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire. Apart from the field research assistants, the AIFES team comprised of 3 persons. During the FGDs and individual interviews, pictures and videos of some of the sessions were taken for proper documentation.

The activities consisted of exploratory visits to all the communities and meeting with a cross section of members of each community led by the gate keepers and also made of the elderly (both males and females) women, youths and the vulnerable (physically challenged). This was followed with visits for the collection of primary data on health status, agricultural products and water and land resources. We further embarked on analysis, validation & dissemination of research findings with the communities. As a follow-up to the this, we engaged the media for awareness creation, gave feedback and sharing of validation reports with the communities, further had interactive sessions with the governing structures of each community; held press conference to disseminate the outcome of the research as an advocacy instrument as well as engagement with key stakeholders: the local authority, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and media. For the case of Kono Boue, pictures and videos of the flood that ravaged the community in June 2024 were shared with us.

4. KEY FINDINGS

Socio- demographic characteristic of respondents

Table 1: Presentation of demographic characteristic of respondents in 5 communities of Ogoni

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	1,070	54.73
Female	885	45.27
Total	1955	100
Age		
20-35	680	34.78
36-45	425	21.74
46-55	400	20.46
56-65	380	19.44
66-above	70	3.58
Total	1955	100

Source: Field Work January -March 2025.

i)Analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondent in Table 1 above, shows that of the two thousand five hundred (2500) copies of questionnaire that were distributed at five hundred (500) copies for each community, one thousand, nine hundred and fifty-five (1955) were successfully retrieved. This is seventy-eight (78.2%) retrieval rate. Out of this number, one thousand and seventy (1,070), equivalent of 54.7% were males, while eight hundred and eighty-five (885), equivalent to 45.27% are females. In the age dis-aggregation, six hundred and eighty (680) or 34.78% are of age 20-35, four hundred and twenty-five (425) or 24.74% 36–45-year-old; four hundred (400) or 20.46% are 46-55 years old; three hundred and eight (380) or 19.44% 56-65 years old and seventy (70) or 13.58% belong to the years 66 and above. This indicates that all the age groups were captured in the distribution of the questionnaire and by implication, their opinion rightly captured.

ii) ***How knowledgeable are the people about climate change****:* Findings from this study indicate that largely, the knowledge base of the people about climate change is very high. In responding to the question. Have you heard of climate change? Over 80% of the respondents were in the affirmative while an insignificant few said either No or don't know. Following this, was the question: have you noticed climate change impacts in your community? Again, the response to this, in the affirmative is over 90%, with an insignificant few saying don't know. The implication is that the people are fully aware of the issues of climate change and consequently, the impacts in their various communities.

iii. Types of climate related issues that have affected the communities in recent years, including the frequency and nature of the occurrence.

The question was asked; what types of climate related issues have affected your

community with options of flood, droughts, heat waves and storms and were made to thick as applicable. Data collated on this indicates that flood and heat waves came tops with variation from community to community and storms following closely. Those who tick droughts were an insignificant few and this is understandable, given our environment and location in the Niger Delta region of the country. Interestingly, it was indicated that their occurrence has been yearly and severity is massive.

iv. The impact of climate change on health of the people:

As it is known, "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" WHO (1948). And climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. The climate crisis threatens to undo the last fifty years of progress in development, global health and poverty reduction, and to further widen existing health inequalities between and within populations WHO (2021). It is therefore, obvious, that climate change is a global crisis exerting deleterious consequences that poses severe health risks to the people. This is actuated by the several years of oil extraction in the area with consequent environmental pollution vis-à-vis environmental degradation, and poor governance structure that is pervasive. Based on this premise, we set out with a critical mindset on determining, as much as possible, how climate change has impacted on the health of the people, generally and specifically through the use of questionnaire, individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).

The findings clearly show that the health status of the people have been confronted on several fronts with innumerable issues across the communities such as 'Rising temperatures' emanating from excessive heat waves that has led to exhaustion and dehydration. Others include: High incidence of eye problems amongst teenagers and adolescents and other groups, skin irritation and itching (an unexplainable itching) leading to black spots on the body, prevalence of early or underage menopause amongst adolescent, high incidence of stroke amongst all age groups, shorter life span (pre-mature death), cardiovascular related issues on the increase. High incidence of dizziness especially, when under the sun, rainfall comes with too much cold. All these has implication on the people such that their state of complete physical, mental and social well-being has been severely impaired thus, compromising their health status. One incidence of stroke, it was particularly noted that a less than thirty-five (35) years old boy has died of stroke (Neebari, male, Buan Community). High incidence of arthritis amongst the people, especially the adolescents.

Specifically, on the mental health front, fears were expressed about the future existence of unborn generation (Daniel Iana, male, Kono Boue). He was anxious about the future, with the disappearance of some plant species and loss of natural food substances. This might lead to stress and depression on the elderly. It was also traumatic for the people of Kono Boue, especially the persons that were directly affected by the massive flood in June, 2024. Some of them were actually displaced

and generally, crops were washed away implying that their income and source of livelihoods came under serious threat. Further, it was observed that warmer climates appear to have increased the presence of mosquitoes and this has given rise to "persistent prevalence of malaria and typhoid". This has implications on their income given the expenditure on the treatment of the disease in the midst of lean financial resources.

Summarily, it is evident that climate change impact both physical and mental health of all age categories in a number of ways that has been highlighted as their health status is compromised by it. In fact, it is seen as a multiplier of the existing inadequacy in the health situation of the people thus, worsening the present conditions, as well as creating new challenges. A compromised health status certainly has negative implications on productivity and this translates to threat to their livelihoods.

v. *The Impact of Climate Change on Agricultural Products: Cassava, Yam, Vegetables, Plantain, Banana, Cocoyam etc...,*

The negative impacts and significance of climate change are well documented in the scientific literature and are now broadly accepted by most of the general public. Climate change threatens the sustainability of crops production via factors such as temperature, rainfall and disease patterns (Rosenzweig, C, et al 2008).

In our contemporary world, agricultural activities that basically involve crop production, and leading to the harvest of the products (yam, cassava, vegetables, etc) represent a paradox in the climate change discourse. It is an accomplice as well as a victim. In this perspective, (Barileera Deekor) observed that "she thinks the application of fertilizer and pesticides contributes to some of the impact of climate change". Indeed, agriculture both contributes to and is a victim of climate change. Agricultural processes contribute to multiple climate pollution (greenhouse gases) which include nitrous oxide (NZO), Carbon dioxide (Co2) and methane (CH4), which cause climate change and global warming and significant impact on the sustainability of food production (Okorie, C.U & Ezechinah, C.A, 2022). However, the negative impact of climate change is felt on agricultural processes and products irrespective of the source. And these are listed to include: Non-fertile soil, hardening of surface soil, vegetables are not soft when cooked, harvest no longer yield bountifully (low yield): yam, cassava, vegetable, maize (corn) plantain, banana, etc. Native Bean (Black in colour) has gone extinct: A specie of yam know as 'Gura' has gone extinct. Cassava planting is now achieved through re-planting of the stems because of pest attack. This is characteristically described as "**second burial**". Disappearance of antelope grass (nya ee loo), a leaf used for cooking; a specie of coco yam known as 'konkoma' has disappeared. Heavy wind that leads to destruction of crops; the application of fertilizer and pesticides on almost all crops planted.

Climate change, therefore, has significant and unquantifiable impacts on agricultural products thus affecting food security, crops yield and even the quality. This is made manifest through the unusually high temperatures, flooding, pest and plant disease occasioned by the abnormal circumstance and heat stress that lowers the nutritional quality of some product as well impacting on the socio-economic status of the people.

vi. The impact of climate change on water and land resources.

Ogoniland, located in the south-south, and Niger Delta Region of the country has one of her reputations as being plagued by environmental degradation from several decades of unsustainable oil exploitation. Given this, the impact of climate change on water and land resources of the area with its consequent manifestation on the livelihoods of the people are highlighted as follows: Abnormal drying up of well water, shrinking streams, incidence of flooding of communities, incidence of erosion, (erosion threatens some buildings in Kono Boue), extinction of streams (Daabo, Ochani, kilogun etc), reduction in the salinity of sea water, issue of low and high tide, the application and use of pesticide on almost all crops planted, the use of herbicides on farms because of the emergence of new weeds, the hardening of the surface of the soil, disappearance of some species of periwinkle and loss of cultural values and religious practices as a result of extinction of streams where cultural ceremonies are conducted.

The implication of all these, is that climate change has exacerbated the challenges associated with water and land resources of the area with manifestation such as water scarcity, flooding of the communities, water pollution, soil degradation, reduced agricultural outputs and heightened vulnerability to weather conditions. It is hereby noted that, although, all the communities have issues with flooding affecting them, it was a peculiar situation in Kono Boue. According to (Barisi Friday, male,kono Boue), they woke up on a day, sometimes in June 2024 to see their community devastated with flood, such that over ninety-five (95) households were forced to temporarily relocate from their homes and some of the buildings (mud house) were destroyed.

1. LEARNINGS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROCESS

An adventure, such as conducting CLR in communities for the first time certainly comes with lessons–both anticipated and unanticipated. These range from observation during the course of the entire process of interactions with them to get their feelings, as much possible and documentation of the unexpected happening. Some of the learnings include: the enabling environment, timeliness of information provided and nature to support from the ESCR-Net Secretariat Project Advisory Group on their part.

For the communities, it shows that local knowledge is useful and critical to understanding adaptation measures. For example, the replanting of cassava stems,

which they characteristically describe as "**second burial**". This demonstrate relevance and practicability. The issues of empowerment and ownership, building trust and collaboration between people, equity and inclusion and capacity building of the people are all lessons learned. On our part, practical lessons and knowledge were acquired from the field. We also provide the community people with appropriate information. Further, the realization that the nature-based solution by the people, is a demonstration that over looked or under rated issues can be very useful to the people.

***About organizing/mobilizing around loss and damage resulting from climate change**:*

These include ability to build grassroots support and solidarity, which can be leveraged on, to build global solidarity and inter-connectivity. It is also about amplifying the voice of those directly affected. This cut across the elderly (men and woman) youths and physically challenged. Loss and damage are basically a justice issue, and this is further highlighted to attract attention. There is also the issue of coalition building which can be achieved between the communities when linked up together, also in using the outcomes of the research for advocacy and the policy framework can be directly linked to local realities.

2. CONCLUSIONS

In conducting CLR around loss and damage on the impact of climate change, with a focus on health, agricultural products, water and land resources; it has shown that it is an inherent powerful instrument that mobilise and enhance the understanding of the locals and provides a possibility as a pathway to climate justice.

It demonstrates that those who are the victims experiencing the impacts directly, certainly carry within them the knowledge, creativity and the innovative solutions. Through the participatory action research (PAR) approaches the communities can generate dependable data, that is relevant and which also strengthen their capacity to not only respond, but adopt and influence policy choices. The community-driven findings which is located in the bottom up approach demonstrated that it can bridge the gaps between lived situation and the responses from the institutions and this gives room to the adaptation strategies which are rooted in reality.

Further, community led research (CLR) exemplifies the need for inclusive, equitable climate action which centers on those most affected and amplying their voices. In the course of doing this, it builds resilience, solidarity and long-term sustainable solutions in the face of an increasing climate challenges.

3. Recommendations:

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made.

1) Education: The communities need intensive sensitization on the broader impacts of climate change and the necessity to design coping mechanisms. This will be achieved through their engagement. Also, during this process, communities will be informed on the need to have records of incidences of their experiences resulting from climate change.

2) Engage government: The governments in the Niger Delta need to be engaged in order to stir them up to take pro-active action about climate change and generally, on disaster response.

3) Restoring sustainable livelihood: There is need to restore sustainable livelihood of community inhabitants and residents by empowering them through grants and formation of cooperatives.

4) Introduction of climate resilient species of crops: There is need to identify and introduce climate resilient species of crops that will resist the vulnerabilities existing now.

5). We also recommend a policy for the adoption of Nature Based Solution (NBS) to prevent loss and damage. The extensive mangrove restoration programme being carried out by the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project (HYPREP) in Ogoni should be replicated by other government authorities in Ogoni.

6). The local government authorities in Ogoni as part of its NBS policy should embark on massive tree-planting campaign across the land as a practical initiative to prevent loss and damage

7). Continuation of our traditional shifting cultivation and bush fallowing farming techniques. It has been recognised that these old farming techniques practiced by our fathers have the capacity for enhancing water retention and maintaining soil health. It also nurtures more resilient ecosystem in the face of flooding events.

8) The government should create a Climate Infrastructure Fund. This should be formed to be used in addressing issues of infrastructure

destroyed by climate incidents such as flooding where bridges etc are destroyed

9) We support the call for the establishment of an insurance scheme focusing on agriculture to address crop losses by farmers as a result of climate change. This will help to cushion the effects of financial risks of farmers by transferring this to the insurance mechanism.

10. Address issues of climate induced migration by creating a comprehensive programme for relocation and integration especially for vulnerable communities.

11. Community Loss and Damage Fund: We call on the government to establish a dedicated funding mechanism that communities affected by climate-related losses and damages can access to enable them deal with the impact of loss and damage.

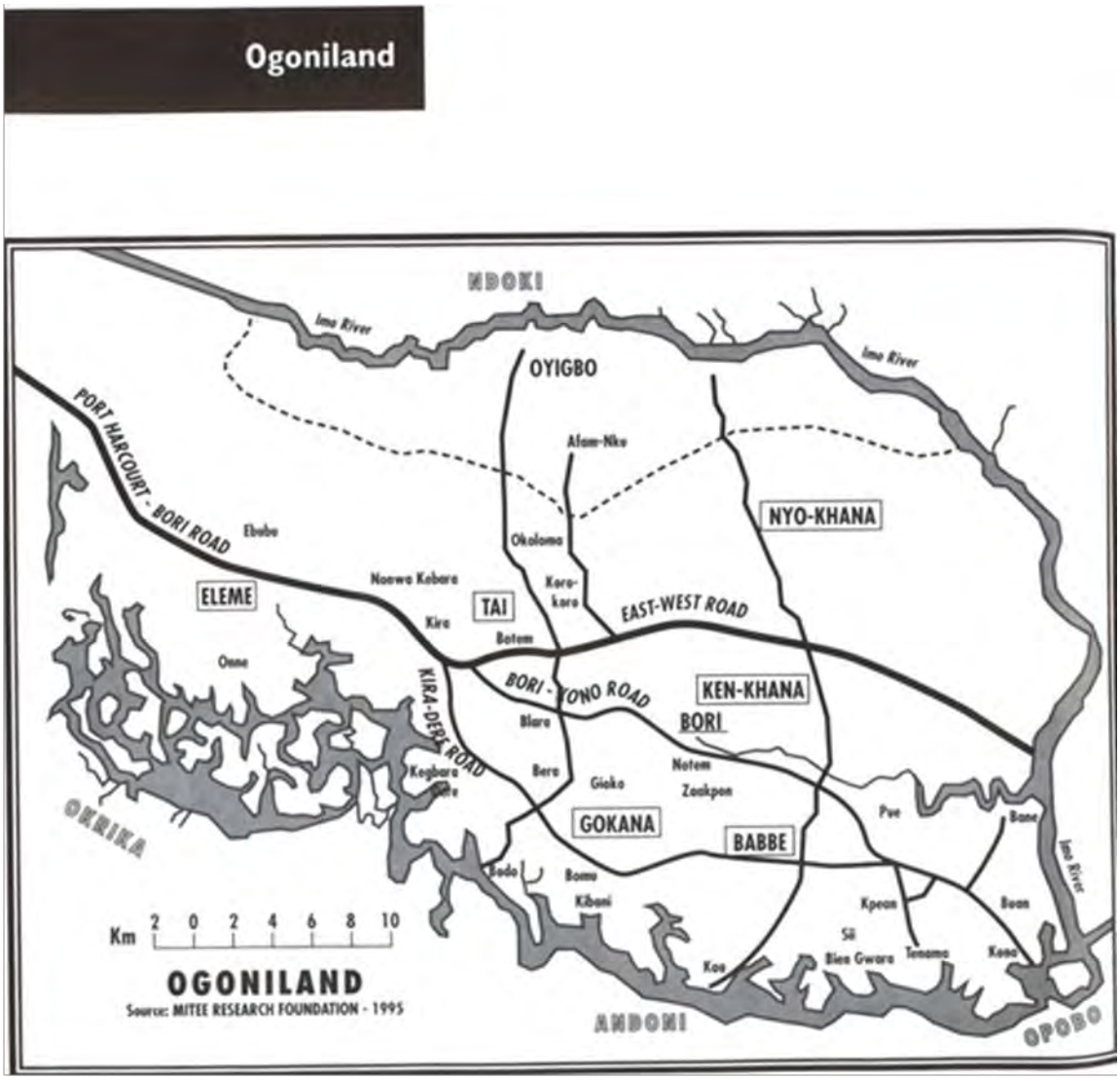
12. The government particularly the local government and community governance structures should strive to Establish an Early Warning Mechanism in Communities. This will enhance the capacity of communities to monitor climate vulnerabilities

Photograph of attendees at the community entry meeting at Kono Boue in Khana LGA

Cross section of partipants at the community entry meeting in Buan Community

Group photograph of participants at the community entry meeting in Korokoro community in Tai LGA

Group photograph of participants at the Validation Workshop organized by the African Indigenous Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development (AIFES) on the Community-led Research on Loss and Damage held today, 7th June, 2025 at the AIFES Secretariat, Port Harcourt



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Map of Ogoniland

Gas Flare Stack

Jet of Oil and Gas During Yorla Oil-pipeline Blowout

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ABOUT AIFES

The African Indigenous Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development (AIFES) was founded with the mandate to advocate and raise awareness of governments and the dominant society at large on situations of indigenous peoples, in relation to energy access, environment, human rights, good governance and perspectives on development and sustainability.

AIFES envisions a world where development is participatory and its processes impact positively on all persons.

It strives to empower the Ogoni people and other marginalized groups by developing programmes and projects in the areas of environment, energy, extractives, human rights, good governance and sustainable development. AIFES carries out its programmes and campaigns through the following actions; Awareness-raising, policy advocacy, education and training, research, communication and publications:

The organization is legally registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with Registration No. 166077 and headquartered in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

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