

MIIDEEKOR NEWSLETTER

A quarterly publication of the Miideekor Environmental Development Initiative-MEDI



Dear friends, partners, and fellow defenders of the Niger Delta environment,

There are moments when the weight of history and the urgency of the present converge, and you are compelled to move with both. This first quarter of 2026 has been one of those moments. As we carry forward the torch of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni Nine, whose sacrifice remains the moral foundation of this work, we entered the year with a clear mandate: that the resistance they gave their lives to build must be answered with evidence, presence, and principled action.

Thirty years since that dark November morning in 1995, the Niger Delta continues to bleed. Farmlands suffocate under crude. Rivers that once fed generations now carry poison. And still, there are those in corridors of power who speak of resuming oil operations in Ogoniland as though the land has healed and justice is a matter of convenience. We are here to remind them, and the world, that it is not.

"The ground beneath our feet has memory. It remembers every spill, every promise broken, every community silenced. MEDI exists to make that memory speak."

This quarter, we went where the evidence is. We conducted site visits to active spill locations in Ogoniland, participated in the HEDA-led Divestment Town Hall in Port Harcourt, and joined HOMEf to facilitate an evidence-gathering programme in the Kpean community, where we led a module connecting the historical arc of environmental degradation in the community to the crises residents face today.

At the Blue Economy Summit in Ikot Ekpene, we said plainly what needed to be said: a blue economy built on polluted waters is not prosperity, it is performance. We also made meaningful progress on our Traditional Climate Adaptation Project in Bodo and Kwawa. We were honoured to pay a solidarity visit to Apostolic Comrade Che, a reminder that this work is not merely institutional. It is human and ancestral.



This newsletter is the record of that quarter. It belongs to the communities that opened their homes and their heartbreak to our teams, to the partners who stood with us, and to every person who believes that documentation is a form of resistance and that presence is a form of solidarity.

To our partners, HOMEf, HEDA, ERA, Social Action, Kebetkache, and many others, your commitment to the coalition reminds us that no organisation wins this fight alone. To the communities of the Niger Delta: we see you, we document you, and we will not stop.

As you read through this newsletter, we invite you to stand with us as partners, advocates, and changemakers in advancing a healthier, more just environment for all.

In solidarity and in service,

Comrade Celestine AkpoBari

Team Lead

**Miideekor Environmental Development
Initiative – MEDI**

ADVOCACY AT THE FRONTLINES OF POLICY

The first quarter of 2026 saw MEDI operate with an uncommon range, from the corridors of European diplomacy to a live national television studio to the ground of a poisoned community in Khana. Across every platform and every engagement, the message was consistent: the Niger Delta crisis is not a regional inconvenience. It is a global human rights emergency. And the time for performative concern has long expired.

EU Ambassador meeting – Ogoni goes global

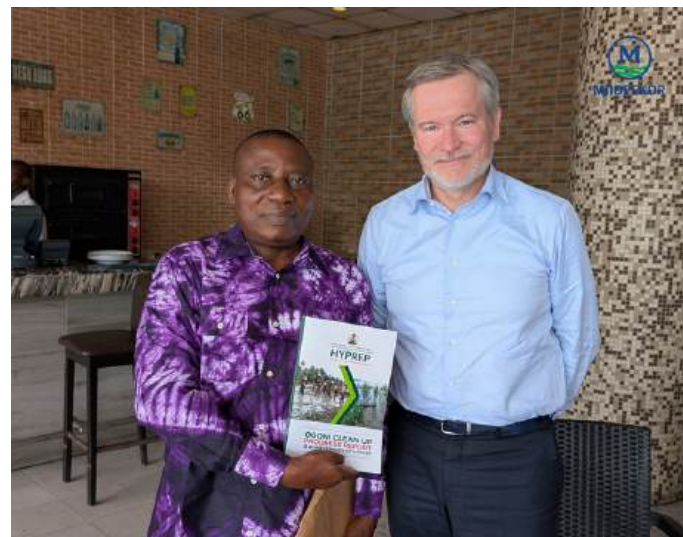
In January 2026, **MEDI's Team Lead, Celestine AkpoBari**, participated in a high-level meeting with the European Union Ambassador to Nigeria. The engagement placed the environmental and human rights crisis of the Niger Delta, particularly the unresolved remediation of Ogoniland, squarely on the diplomatic agenda of one of Nigeria's most significant international partners.

Discussions centred on the ongoing oil divestment crisis, the deeply inadequate pace of HYPREP-led cleanup operations, and the urgent need for international accountability mechanisms that can compel both the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies to honour long-standing obligations to affected communities. MEDI used this platform to make clear that the issue of Ogoniland is not merely a domestic governance matter; it is a test of international environmental law, corporate liability, and the meaning of the word "remediation".

EU Engagement · January 2026

Key issues raised with the EU Ambassador

The state of HYPREP funding and implementation · The absence of community-centred oversight in the oil divestment process · The need for the European Union to condition trade and investment relationships with Nigeria on measurable environmental remediation progress · The continued exposure of Ogoni communities to toxic pollution decades after UNEP's landmark 2011 report and its recommendations.



Team Lead and the EU Ambassador – Ambassador Gautier Mignot

By elevating the Ogoni crisis to the level of EU diplomatic discourse, MEDI ensured that the international community cannot remain a passive observer while Nigeria's most marginalised communities continue to bear the cost of decades of extractive negligence.

Arise TV appearance – rebutting the sabotage narrative



In one of the most consequential media engagements of the quarter, MEDI's Team Lead joined a live session on Arise Television's national broadcast, one of Nigeria's most-watched news platforms to speak to issues of acute public importance: the state of emergency in Ogoniland, the government's response to the Kpean oil spill, and the structural failures embedded in Nigeria's oil divestment framework.

The appearance came in direct response to a narrative that had been gaining official traction. In late December 2025, the National Security Adviser, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, led a federal government delegation to the Kpean spill site and publicly attributed the environmental disaster to sabotage, describing the culprits as "enemies of the people."

Ribadu's characterisation, while politically convenient, stood in sharp contrast to the documented evidence: a Joint Investigation Visit (JIV) conducted in August 2025 had already confirmed that the spill from Well 14, Yola Field, was caused by equipment failure, specifically the severe rust and corrosion of a wellhead that had been abandoned since 1993. The government's sabotage narrative, in **MEDI's** assessment, was a deliberate deflection designed to shield NNPC from liability and silence legitimate community grievances.

"Personalities like the National Security Adviser and the Minister of Environment paid a visit to Kpean, saw what happened, and as we speak, nothing has been done to clear that mess or give water to the community. Ogoniland deserves the same protection, resources and dignity that other parts of Nigeria already enjoy."

Comrade Celestine AkpoBari was unequivocal: the spill was not an act of sabotage; it was the predictable consequence of criminal negligence. A wellhead corroded beyond functionality, abandoned for over three decades and surrounded by farming communities, was an environmental time bomb. The government's failure to decommission it, despite explicit recommendations in the UNEP 2011 report, made the state an active participant in the disaster, not merely a first responder to it.

ADVOCACY & POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Core positions articulated on national television

Policy Position · Q1 2026

MEDI's formal demands on oil divestment and the PIA

Immediate suspension of all divestment processes that exclude host community participation and consent.

Full transfer of environmental liabilities from divesting IOCs to successor operators, with regulatory enforcement by NUPRC.

Mandatory community-centred remediation plans as a precondition for asset transfer approval.

PIA amendment to expressly grant communities legal standing in divestment proceedings.

Independent, scientifically monitored cleanup processes , not political delegations or cosmetic assessments

There must be no resumption of oil operations in **Ogoniland** until all legitimate demands, as enshrined in the Ogoni Bill of Rights, are fully met. The Federal Government must declare a state of emergency in Ogoni and provide clean water, relief, and compensation to all communities affected by oil spillage. The NSA's sabotage framing misrepresents documented evidence of equipment failure and operational neglect. Nigeria must treat Ogoniland with the same dignity, resources, and seriousness of response it extends to other parts of the country

Challenging the PIA — a law that leaves communities behind.

On the national airwaves, the team lead also turned his attention to the **Petroleum Industry Act (PIA)**, the landmark 2021 legislation intended to transform Nigeria's oil sector and deliver meaningful development to host communities. **MEDI's** assessment of the **PIA** after four years of implementation is unsparing: the legislation, as currently structured, does not have the community at its heart.



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MEDI's public position, as articulated on Arise Television and reinforced through subsequent statements, is a **call for an immediate halt to all divestments** that do not include mandatory community consultation, environmental liability transfer, and transparent remediation commitments. The PIA amendment process currently underway, MEDI argues, must be seized as an opportunity to re-centre the rights of host communities, not merely rearrange the governance architecture of NNPC and its regulators.

"Personalities like the National Security Adviser and the Minister of Environment paid a visit to Kpean, saw what happened, and as we speak, nothing has been done to clear that mess or give water to the community. Ogoniland deserves the same protection, resources and dignity that other parts of Nigeria already enjoy."

Comrade Celestine AkpoBari, Team Lead, MEDI · Arise Television, February 2026



PROJECTS & COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Rooted in the earth, anchored in community

If advocacy is the voice of this work, then field and community action is its hands. This quarter, MEDI operated in two distinct but deeply connected registers: building futures through environmental restoration and cultural revival, and bearing witness to present devastation through solidarity visits to communities on the frontlines of Nigeria's oil crisis. Both are acts of justice. Both are indispensable.



TRADITIONAL CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROJECT — MEMORY AS A CLIMATE STRATEGY

At the heart of **MEDI's** programmatic work this quarter is a conviction that has guided environmental advocates in the Niger Delta for generations: that the Ogoni and Niger Delta peoples already possess, in their traditions, their practices, and their ecological memory, some of the most effective tools for confronting the climate crisis. The Traditional Climate Adaptation Project is MEDI's deliberate effort to recover, document, and revitalise those tools before they are lost entirely.

In **Q1 2026**, the project unfolded across two distinct sites and community engagements, each addressing a different dimension of Indigenous climate resilience and together forming a compelling body of work that places culture, ecology, and community agency at the centre of Nigeria's climate response.



MEDI MANGROVE RESTORATION AND NURSERY ESTABLISHMENT — BODO, Ogoniland

In the **Bodo community, Ogoniland**, MEDI led a sensitisation and practical engagement programme on mangrove restoration and nursery establishment, bringing together community members and students from the Young Environmentalists Network (TYEN) at the University of Port Harcourt in a collaboration that joined indigenous knowledge with youthful energy.

The choice of mangroves is not incidental. Nigeria hosts Africa's largest mangrove ecosystem, and the Niger Delta sits at its heart. Yet decades of oil spills, invasive plant species, and deforestation have devastated what was once a thriving coastal forest.

Studies confirm that mangrove cover in the Niger Delta decreased by over 2,000 square kilometres between 2010 and 2020 alone, and if current rates of loss continue, the ecosystem faces near-total collapse within fifty years.

For communities in Bodo and across Ogoniland, this is not an environmental statistic. It is the disappearance of a way of life: the fish nurseries that fed families, the natural flood barriers that protected homes, the carbon sinks that stabilised the climate, and the wood that built generations of Ogoni homes.

The sensitisation sessions in Bodo educated participants on nursery establishment, the selection and preparation of mangrove seedlings, the management of planting sites, and the critical role of community ownership in ensuring long-term survival of restored ecosystems. TYEN members from the University of Port Harcourt brought academic rigour and intergenerational solidarity to the engagement, reinforcing the message that environmental stewardship is not the exclusive domain of elders or professionals, but a shared civic responsibility.

MANGROVE RESTORATION SENSITISATION — KEY OUTCOMES



Community members trained on nursery preparation, seedling management, and planting site selection · TYEN (Young Environmentalists Network, University of Port Harcourt) engaged as youth partners in knowledge transfer and restoration action · Local ecological wisdom integrated with scientific restoration principles · Community understanding deepened on the relationship between mangrove health, fish stocks, flood control, and climate resilience · Groundwork laid for ongoing nursery establishment and phased replanting programme



"Mangroves are more than trees. They are the architecture of the Niger Delta's survival: flood shields, fish nurseries, carbon vaults, and ancestral legacy. Restoring them is not an environmental project. It is an act of cultural restitution."



THE TRADITIONAL CLAY POT – KWAWA COMMUNITY AND THE REVIVAL OF WOMEN'S CLIMATE WISDOM



In the Kwawa community, the **Traditional Climate Adaptation Project** turned its lens on one of the most quietly powerful and most endangered indigenous practices in the Niger Delta: the traditional clay pot. This engagement brought together over 50 women from the community in a landmark activity that was simultaneously a cultural revival, a climate adaptation exercise, and a statement of gendered environmental leadership.

The traditional clay pot is far more than a vessel. In Ogoni and Niger Delta communities, it represents a sophisticated indigenous technology for water cooling, food preservation, and temperature regulation that requires no electricity, refrigeration infrastructure, or imported materials. In a region increasingly battered by rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and climate-induced food insecurity, these are not minor conveniences; they are survival technologies. Yet the practice of clay pot making had been declining for decades, displaced by plastic containers and aluminium cookware, and with it, the knowledge systems that sustained communities through ecological stress.



MEDI's engagement in Kwawa created a structured space for elderly women, the custodians of this craft, to pass their knowledge to younger community members, with documentation that will form part of MEDI's Traditional Knowledge Archive. The participation of over 50 women in this revival was both a milestone and a message: that the keepers of indigenous climate wisdom are women and that any credible climate adaptation strategy in the Niger Delta must centre their agency, knowledge, and participation.

What is being revived in Kwawa is not nostalgia. It is intelligence. These women are not looking backward, they are demonstrating that the solutions to the climate crisis do not always require new technologies. Sometimes, they require the recovery of knowledge that was never inferior but only interrupted.



Traditional clay pot revival – what was accomplished

Over 50 women engaged in hands-on clay pot making and preservation techniques. Inter-generational knowledge transfer facilitated between elder craftswomen and younger community members. Climate adaptation functions of the clay pot documented: natural cooling, food preservation, reduced dependence on energy-intensive alternatives · Indigenous practice formally integrated into **MEDI's Traditional Climate Adaptation** documentation framework · Community pride and cultural identity strengthened as a dimension of climate resilience.



MEDI at the Community Frontlines

Kpean community site visit — witnessing what words cannot fully capture



Not all of **MEDI's** work this quarter was about building futures. Some of it was about refusing to look away from the present. In Q1 2026, MEDI joined the **Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)**, the ecological think tank and advocacy organisation led by Rev. Dr Nnimmo Bassey, for a significant site visit to Kpean community in Khana Local Government Area, Ogoniland.



MEDI's role was deliberate: to organise community members ahead of the visit, ensuring farmers, fisherfolk, women, and youth were present and prepared to speak, and to mobilise the wider network of environmental defenders so the visit carried the weight of collective witness rather than institutional routine.



The visit was occasioned by the ongoing environmental crisis following the oil spill from **Well 14 at the Yorla Oil Field**, which began in August 2025; was compounded by a fire outbreak days later; and had received no meaningful cleanup response by the time the team arrived, despite a visit by the National Security Adviser and repeated federal assurances.



What the team encountered was devastating. Farmlands smothered in crude. Rivers rendered undrinkable. A community hosting over 14 oil wells with no functional water supply, no remediation timeline, and no government presence beyond visits that produced photographs and promises.



The visit deepened MEDI's on-the-ground documentation of the Kpean crisis, reinforced the solidarity relationship with the community, and laid the groundwork for the evidence gathering programme that followed. MEDI does not visit communities like Kpean as observers. We go as partners, and we leave with obligations.



Community testimony – Kpean

"Since this spill started, we can no longer farm or fish. Oil is flowing into our water. We buy sachet water to survive. There has been a strange sickness in the community, leading to deaths."

Community member Kpean, as documented during the visit.



Alliances, Partnerships and Coalitions



MEDI has always understood that the scale of injustice in the Niger Delta requires a scale of response that no single organisation can sustain alone. The strength of this movement lies not in any one voice, but in the quality and consistency of the coalitions built around shared principles: that communities must be centred, that evidence must anchor advocacy, and that accountability cannot be selective. This quarter, MEDI's partnership work took us from a panel stage in Akwa Ibom to a regulatory agency office, from a community monitoring exercise in Kpean to a town hall that brought together government, civil society, and host communities under the same roof to speak plainly about an industry in transition.

First Niger Delta Blue Economy Investment Summit – Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State

From the 9th to 11th of February 2026, MEDI's Team Lead participated in the inaugural Niger Delta Blue Economy Investment Summit at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel in Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State. The summit targeted \$10 billion in investment and drew policymakers, international ocean governance experts, and civil society representatives from across Africa. The ambition in the room was considerable. But ambition, as Comrade Celestine Akpobari made clear from the panel, is not enough when the foundation it rests on is broken.

Comrade AkpoBari asked the room directly: "Is this the environment we want to build a blue economy on? The Niger Delta's coastal waters are among the most contaminated in the world. Fish stocks are depleted. Fishing communities, the natural custodians of any coastal economy, have been systematically dispossessed. Dr Rev. Nnimmo Bassey, on the same panel, pressed the point further.

MEDI's position was clear: full cleanup and remediation must precede any blue economy activation in affected coastal communities. Host communities must be mapped as primary stakeholders from the outset, not consulted as afterthoughts once investment frameworks are set. And the model of the oil economy, which extracted enormous wealth from the Niger Delta while leaving its people in poverty, must not be repeated under a different name. Ownership, not just employment, must be on the table.

Collaborative advocacy visit to NOSDRA – the Bille Kingdom gas eruption



Since October 2025, residents of Bille Kingdom in the Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State have been living with a crisis that defies ordinary description: water bubbling from the ground, rivers foaming with trapped gas, a persistent sulphurous smell, and, in some locations, air that can be set alight. Air quality tests conducted by NOSDRA in December 2025 recorded methane levels at one site registering 10,000 times above normal background levels. Yet the agency withheld its findings. NUPRC did not formally announce an investigation until March 20th, 2026, five full months after the eruption became visible. The identity of the responsible operator remained unclear.

MEDI, together with Environmental Rights Action (ERA) and Social Action, conducted a collaborative advocacy visit to the Port Harcourt Zonal Head of NOSDRA to press directly on the agency's response

Collaborative advocacy visit to NOSDRA – the Bille Kingdom gas eruption

The coalition sought a clear account of what investigations were underway and what timeline had been set for protecting Bille residents. What they encountered confirmed the community's experience: officials acknowledged the situation but offered no definite timeline. The Port Harcourt Zonal Head assured the coalition he would relay their concerns upward. That a community breathing air 10,000 times over the safe methane threshold was still awaiting a response timeline five months into the crisis was, in itself, the accountability gap MEDI and its partners went to name.

The coalition also demanded the immediate public release of NOSDRA's test results, arguing that residents had an unqualified right to know the condition of their own environment. Regulatory inaction in Bille was not passive. It was its own form of harm. MEDI's visit was part of a sustained civil society effort to ensure that Bille did not remain invisible to the institutions that owe it a response.

HOMEF evidence gathering programme – Kpean Community



In Q1 2026, MEDI joined the Health of Mother Earth Foundation in the delivery of an environmental monitoring and evidence gathering training programme held in Kpean community. HOMEF, led by its Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Nnimmo Bassey, coordinated the programme as part of its broader effort to equip affected communities with the tools and knowledge to document environmental damage independently, building a body of community-generated evidence that can anchor both legal claims and advocacy action.



The programme brought together community members, including farmers, fisherfolk, youth representatives, and women's groups, and was attended by the Paramount Ruler of Kpean, Chief Lucky Gbene-Ewoh, who described in clear terms the cumulative damage his community has absorbed since oil operations began. The training covered environmental monitoring techniques, documentation standards, and the rights of communities in the JIV process.

A communique issued at the close of the programme formalised the community's demands: immediate and comprehensive cleanup in line with international best practice, decommissioning of all failing wellheads, and the enforcement of Free, Prior and Informed Consent processes for any future oil activity in the area.



MEDI's role in this engagement was as an organising and mobilising partner, ensuring community readiness ahead of the programme and widening the circle of civil society presence at the event. The evidence gathered in Kpean this quarter now forms part of a growing documentation record that MEDI and partner organisations will deploy in regulatory, legislative, and international advocacy contexts.

Across all four of these coalition engagements, what holds them together is a commitment to the same principle: that communities affected by Nigeria's oil economy must not be left to navigate its consequences alone. MEDI brings its specific capabilities, its advocacy voice, its knowledge of the regulatory landscape, and its relationships with partner organisations in service of that principle. In every engagement this quarter, the community was not the subject of the work. It was the reason for it.



MEDI Engagement at HEDA Resource Centre & NRG I Divestment Town Hall – Port Harcourt



About MEDI

The Miideekor Environmental Development Initiative (MEDI) is a Nigerian civil society organisation rooted in the Ogoni struggle, working to advance environmental justice, community rights, and ecological restoration across the Niger Delta. Led by Comrade Celestine Akpobari, MEDI combines advocacy, evidence-based documentation, and traditional knowledge to confront the long-standing impact of oil-related pollution.

From holding oil companies and regulators accountable to supporting communities in protecting their environment and reviving local climate practices, MEDI works across multiple spaces—on spill sites, in communities, and in policy circles. At its core is a simple belief: the people of the Niger Delta are not passive beneficiaries of development, but rightful owners whose voices must shape decisions that affect their land and future.

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On the 25th and 26th of March 2026, MEDI participated in a community town hall on oil divestment and transition accountability in the Niger Delta, convened in Port Harcourt and Bayelsa by the Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA Resource Centre), in collaboration with the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), and a coalition that included Social Action, HOMEf, Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, and Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN).

The town hall came at a moment of acute urgency. Major international oil companies, including Shell, ExxonMobil, TotalEnergies, and Eni, have been divesting their onshore assets across the Niger Delta, transferring operational control to indigenous firms in what is presented as a business restructuring. Communities across the region, however, have experienced this transition as a handover of pollution without a handover of accountability. Environmental liabilities accumulated over decades of multinational extraction are not travelling with the assets. The communities left behind are discovering that the new operators inherit the infrastructure but not the obligation to remediate the damage already done.

The forum brought together regulators, civil society, community representatives, and the media in a structure that prioritised genuine dialogue over formal presentation. The NUPRC's representative reaffirmed that all divestment processes must comply with standards before approval, and that acquiring companies must demonstrate technical and financial capacity to manage assets responsibly. MEDI and partner organisations used the platform to press further: capacity to manage assets is not the same as willingness to remediate damage. The two must be evaluated separately, and communities must have a clear legal mechanism to enforce both.

MEDI's participation reinforced a position that has been consistent across all engagements this quarter: that the divestment process, as currently structured, is a governance failure dressed as a market transaction. The town hall created a documented record of community grievances and civil society positions that will be carried into future regulatory and legislative engagement.