

MIIDEEKOR NEWSLETTER

A quarterly publication of the Miideekor Environmental Development Initiative-MEDI



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

Welcome to the second-quarter edition of the MEDI's Newsletter, where we share the stories, milestones, and moments that have shaped our work over the past three months.

The second quarter of 2026 was one of purpose, collaboration, and courageous advocacy. It was a quarter that reminded us that meaningful change is built through partnerships, community voices, and the determination to stand with those whose stories are too often ignored.

Throughout the quarter, we strengthened relationships with allies across the environmental justice movement, participated in important learning and policy engagements, and continued amplifying the voices of frontline communities affected by environmental degradation.

One defining moment was our participation in the People's Assembly solidarity and advocacy visit to Bille Kingdom, where residents continue to endure the devastating impacts of the gas eruption that began in October 2025.

For months, the crisis received little meaningful attention from both the federal and Rivers State governments. Our collective visit, alongside partners and community leaders, helped bring renewed public attention to the unfolding humanitarian and environmental emergency. While much remains to be done, we have since witnessed encouraging signs of increased government engagement, reinforcing our belief.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the trust of the communities we serve, the dedication of our partners, and the support of friends who continue to stand with us in the pursuit of environmental justice. This work is not merely institutional. It is human and ancestral.



As you journey through this edition, we invite you to celebrate these milestones with us, reflect on the challenges that remain, and renew your commitment to protecting our environment. Every action matters. Whether through advocacy, partnership, research, or community engagement, each of us has a role to play in building a healthier, more just, and sustainable future.

Thank you for standing with MEDI throughout this quarter. We look forward to deepening our impact with you in the story in the months ahead.

In solidarity,

Dr Aduku Elizabeth O.
Head, Programs and Communications
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ADVOCACY-SPEAKING TRUTH. DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY.

Environmental justice begins with speaking up. Throughout the quarter, MEDI engaged in policy dialogues, campaign planning, and regional conferences, ensuring that the voices of frontline communities remained at the centre of conversations on accountability, remediation, and a just transition.

When the Flames Refuse to Die: Standing with Awoye in the Fight for Justice

For six years, the Ororo-1 oil well fire off the coast of Awoye, Ondo State, has continued to burn. What should have been treated as a national environmental emergency has instead become a painful symbol of neglect. The relentless blaze has polluted fishing waters, displaced families, endangered public health, and robbed an entire community of its means of survival.

Recognising that such injustices cannot be ignored, the Miidekor Environmental Development Initiative (MEDI), led by our Team Lead, Comrade Celestine AkpoBari, joined environmental advocates, grassroots organisers, and community representatives from across the Niger Delta and beyond at a strategic campaign planning workshop held in Benin City from May 4–6, 2026.

Convened by the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) in partnership with LINGO (Leave It In The Ground), the three-day workshop was designed to strengthen a coordinated campaign demanding accountability for the Ororo-1 disaster and justice for the people of Awoye.

The workshop created a space for frontline communities to share lived experiences while participants exchanged ideas on advocacy, strategic communications, storytelling, movement building, and collective action. It was a reminder that environmental justice is not won in isolation. It is built through collaboration, solidarity, and the courage of communities determined to be heard.

For MEDI, the gathering was more than a learning opportunity. It reinforced our belief that community voices must remain at the centre of every campaign for environmental justice. We left Benin City with stronger partnerships, practical advocacy tools, and renewed determination to challenge the culture of silence that too often surrounds environmental harm in the Niger Delta.

We commend **HOMEF** and **LINGO** for convening this important platform and for their continued commitment to supporting community-led resistance against ecological destruction. Their work demonstrates the power of bringing affected communities and advocates together to develop shared strategies for lasting change.



As an organisation committed to environmental justice, MEDI will continue to stand with the people of Awoye until the Ororo-1 fire is extinguished, those responsible are held accountable, and the community receives the justice it has been denied for far too long.

The Niger Delta is not a sacrifice zone. Every community deserves clean air, safe water, healthy ecosystems, and the dignity of living in an environment free from preventable disasters. That is the future we will continue to advocate for.



Advocacy-Speaking Truth. Demanding Accountability. Beyond Cleanup: Why Accountability Must Come First



On **14 May 2026**, MEDI joined environmental advocates, civil society organisations, community leaders, and policy actors from across the Niger Delta at the **5th Niger Delta Alternatives Convergence (NDAC) in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State**.

Held under the theme **"Decommissioning and Accountability"**, the convergence created an important platform for examining one of the most pressing yet often overlooked issues in Nigeria's oil and gas sector: what happens when oil infrastructure reaches the end of its life, and who bears responsibility for the environmental damage it leaves behind?



Representing **MEDI**, our Team Lead, **Comrade Celestine AkpoBari**, participated in a high-level panel discussion that revisited the environmental realities of Ogoniland more than three decades after the execution of environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and 8 other Ogoni activists.

Drawing from decades of environmental advocacy, he challenged prevailing narratives around cleanup and remediation. He observed that despite repeated government commitments and international attention, the federal government has not directly funded the cleanup of Ogoniland, raising difficult questions about political will, environmental responsibility, and long-term justice for affected communities.

He also highlighted the broader challenge of decommissioning ageing oil facilities across the Niger Delta. According to him, meaningful environmental restoration cannot happen in isolation. Cleaning up Ogoniland alone will never be enough if pollution continues to spread from neighbouring oil-producing communities through shared rivers, wetlands, and ecosystems.

His engagement reinforced a simple but often neglected reality: the Niger Delta is one interconnected ecosystem. Environmental degradation does not stop at community boundaries, and neither should efforts to restore it.

Throughout the convergence, participants echoed a common call for stronger corporate responsibility, effective regulatory oversight, and transparent decommissioning processes that prioritise people and the environment over profit. Discussions also explored the need for governments and oil companies to honour their legal and moral obligations by safely retiring obsolete infrastructure, remediating polluted sites, and ensuring affected communities are not left to bear the costs of decades of extraction.



For **MEDI**, the convergence reiterated that environmental justice extends beyond cleaning polluted land. It requires accountability, honest governance, and sustained commitment to restoring both ecosystems and the dignity of the people who depend on them.

As conversations around energy transition continue to gain momentum, **MEDI** remains committed to ensuring that the voices of frontline communities are not sidelined. A just transition must begin with justice for communities that have lived with the consequences of oil extraction for generations



ADVOCACY-SPEAKING TRUTH. DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY.

MEDI AMPLIFIES FRONTLINE VOICES AT THE 4TH NIGER DELTA CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

From 29 June to 4 July 2026, MEDI participated in the **4th Niger Delta Climate Change Conference**, joining environmental advocates, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders to advance conversations on climate justice and environmental accountability.

A major highlight was the **Reparations Day of Action**, where discussions focused on the human and environmental cost of decades of oil extraction in the Niger Delta. The keynote by **Dr. Nnimmo Bassey** challenged stakeholders to confront the links between extractivism, ecological destruction, and human rights abuses, while calling for genuine accountability.



MEDI was not just in attendance. Our Team Lead, **Dr. Celestine AkpoBari**, and Head of Programmes and Communications, **Dr. Aduku Elizabeth** served as panellists during the session "Oil, Injustice, and Human Security: Extractivism, Abrasion, and the Call for Reparations."

Drawing from our recent work in Ogoniland and Bille Kingdom, we shared firsthand evidence of communities still living with polluted water, toxic gas emissions, and the slow pace of environmental remediation.



Our message was clear: reparations must go beyond promises. They must result in clean water, restored ecosystems, healthier communities, and justice for those who have borne the costs of oil extraction.



The conference reinforced MEDI's commitment to ensuring that the experiences of frontline communities continue to shape national and global conversations on climate justice. Wherever these conversations take place, we will continue to advocate for environmental justice and lasting accountability for the people of the Niger Delta.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Standing with Communities, Listening, Learning, Acting.

Environmental justice begins with the people who live closest to the damage. This quarter, MEDI continued to work alongside communities, creating spaces for dialogue, sharing knowledge, documenting environmental realities, and supporting locally driven solutions. From Bille to Kaani, our engagements reinforced a belief at the heart of our work: communities are not passive victims of environmental degradation. They are knowledge holders, advocates, and essential partners in the work of restoring the environment.



RECLAIMING ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY: COMMUNITIES CHART A PATH TO ENVIRONMENTAL RECOVERY

On **11 June 2026**, MEDI hosted **Oilwatch International's Reclaiming Ecological Integrity Project** at the Miideekor Centre in Kaani, Ogoniland, bringing together community leaders, women, youth, environmental advocates, and grassroots stakeholders to discuss environmental restoration and community resilience.

The gathering was rooted in a simple but powerful belief: communities that have lived with environmental degradation also possess valuable knowledge and solutions that deserve to be recognised and strengthened.



The dialogue examined the impacts of extractive activities across the Niger Delta, while highlighting the value of indigenous knowledge and community-led solutions. Participants explored practical approaches including traditional soil and water management, tree planting, waste recycling, renewable energy, environmental monitoring, and green livelihoods.

In his keynote address, MEDI Team Lead, **Dr. Celestine AkpoBari**, stressed the importance of preserving indigenous ecological knowledge and ensuring greater participation of women in environmental advocacy and decision-making.

The gathering reaffirmed a central truth: lasting environmental justice must be rooted in the communities most affected. By combining indigenous knowledge, collective action, and practical solutions, communities can play a leading role in restoring the ecosystems on which their lives and livelihoods depend.



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BILLE IN CRISIS: WITNESSING AN ECOLOGICAL DISASTER UNFOLD

On **13 June 2026**, MEDI, alongside members of the **People's Assembly** and other partner organisations, undertook a solidarity and advocacy visit to **Bille Kingdom** in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. What we encountered was not simply another polluted community. We witnessed the devastating human cost of decades of environmental neglect.

For years, Bille has borne the burden of oil pollution. However, the environmental crisis deepened significantly between **2011** and 2013, following major failures along critical pipeline infrastructure, including the Nembe Creek Trunk Line. The resulting spills devastated more than 13,000 hectares of mangrove forest, destroying one of the Niger Delta's most important ecosystems and undermining the livelihoods of thousands of people who depend on fishing and other river-based occupations.



Today, the consequences have become even more alarming.

Across several parts of the community, toxic gas and methane are escaping through the ground, bubbling in residential areas, surfacing in rivers, and contaminating drinking water sources. Residents now live with the daily fear of fire outbreaks, worsening health conditions, and an environment that continues to deteriorate with little meaningful intervention.

The visit exposed more than environmental damage. It revealed a humanitarian crisis. Families struggle to access safe drinking water. Fisherfolk have watched their traditional livelihoods disappear. Children are growing up in an environment where the air they breathe and the water they drink may pose risks to their health.

For MEDI and our partners, this was a moment of solidarity but also of responsibility.



We engaged community members, documented evidence of the ongoing environmental hazards, and renewed our collective call for urgent action.

Bille cannot continue to bear the consequences of decades of neglect.

The community urgently needs emergency medical support, access to clean and safe drinking water, comprehensive environmental remediation, and an independent investigation into the ongoing gas seepage. Above all, the people of Bille deserve justice and the opportunity to rebuild their lives in a safe and healthy environment.

At MEDI, we will continue to amplify the voices of the people of Bille until those responsible act. Environmental justice cannot remain a promise on paper while communities continue to live through an avoidable ecological and public health disaster.

PARTNERSHIPS & SOLIDARITY



MEDI Brings the Ogoni Story to the International Working Group on Petroleum Pollution and Just Transition

The week concluded with “The land speaks”, a moving community theatre event where artistic performances gave voice to the lived experiences of oil-producing communities across the Niger Delta.

MEDI participated in the week-long activities of the International Working Group on Petroleum Pollution and Just Transition in the Niger Delta, contributing to discussions on environmental justice, accountability, and the future of oil-impacted communities.

A key highlight of the engagement was the expert review of the landmark Bayelsa environmental report, *An Environmental Genocide: Counting the Human and Environmental Cost of Oil in Bayelsa, Nigeria*, which brought together environmental experts, researchers, and advocates to examine the far-reaching impacts of oil pollution in the state.

The programme also featured a town hall meeting that convened community leaders, civil society organisations, environmental defenders, and government representatives.

During one of the panel sessions, **MEDI's team lead, Dr. Celestine AkpoBari**, reflected on the legacy of the **Ogoni struggle** led by **Ken Saro-Wiwa**. He shared lessons from the movement's decades-long campaign for environmental justice, stressing that organised, community-led advocacy remains one of the strongest tools for demanding remediation, accountability, and reparations.

He encouraged communities in Bayelsa to draw inspiration from the resilience and strategic approach of the Ogoni people in advancing their own struggle for environmental justice.

MEDI facilitated the performance by Ogoni women, whose presentation traced the history of the Ogoni struggle and reflected on the meaning of '**Miideekor**', an Ogoni expression meaning '**rent** and '**royalty**'. Their performance reminded participants that the Ogoni struggle has always been about more than environmental restoration.

At its heart is the demand that communities receive justice, dignity, and a fair share of the wealth derived from the resources beneath their land.

For MEDI, the event reaffirmed the importance of preserving community histories, learning from past struggles, and building stronger solidarity across the Niger Delta in the collective pursuit of environmental justice.



BEARING WITNESS IN BILLE: RESEARCH EXPOSES AN ESCALATING ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY



On 28–29 May 2026, MEDI facilitated a two-day field mission to Bille Kingdom for Dr. Numbere, an environmental researcher conducting an assessment on behalf of one of our international partners. The mission was designed to document the scale of the ongoing gas seepage crisis and generate evidence to support advocacy for urgent intervention.

Over the course of the visit, Dr. Numbere and the MEDI team covered six communities and assessed 22 sampling locations, documenting an environmental emergency that continues to endanger lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

The findings were deeply concerning. Gas was observed escaping from abandoned boreholes, bubbling through residential grounds, rising from drinking water wells, and surfacing in sections of the river. In several locations, the ground itself visibly shook as gas forced its way to the surface, confirming the widespread nature of the seepage beneath the community.

The assessment highlighted the serious risks facing residents. Beyond the immediate danger of fire or explosion, the contamination of water sources and the continuous release of gas threaten public health, aquatic life, and the fishing economy that sustains many families in Bille.



Despite the absence of formal technical support, community members have developed improvised ways of reducing the immediate danger. Some have installed makeshift vent pipes to channel trapped gas away from homes, while others have redirected emissions towards nearby water bodies in an effort to reduce the risk around residential areas. These efforts reflect the resilience and ingenuity of a community that has been left to confront a growing environmental crisis largely on its own.

As part of the field visit, **Dr. Numbere** also led a community safety session, introducing residents to a practical emergency response framework for gas leaks and fire incidents. The session equipped participants with basic steps to improve preparedness and reduce risks while they await a comprehensive response from the relevant authorities.



For MEDI, the mission was about more than documenting environmental damage. It was about ensuring that the experiences of the people of Bille are supported by credible scientific evidence and brought to the attention of decision-makers. We remain committed to working with researchers, partners, and affected communities to push for the urgent action, accountability, and long-term solutions that Bille deserves.





THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH US

As we close this edition of the Miideekor Environmental Development Initiative -MEDI Quarterly Newsletter, we want to thank everyone who continues to stand with us in the work for environmental justice.

To the communities that open their doors and share their stories, thank you for your trust. To our partners and allies, thank you for your solidarity, collaboration, and continued commitment. To the environmental defenders, researchers, advocates, volunteers, and friends who continue to amplify these struggles, your support strengthens the work.

The stories in this edition remind us that the fight for a safe and healthy environment is far from over. From communities confronting pollution and environmental emergencies to advocates demanding accountability and restoration, the work continues.

We remain committed to listening, documenting, amplifying, and acting. And we know that this work is stronger when we do it together. Thank you for reading, for caring, and for standing with the communities at the heart of this work.

Until the next edition, we remain in solidarity.

**Miideekor Environmental Development Initiative -MEDI
Rooted in resistance. Driven by evidence. Committed to environmental justice.**

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