

The New West African Gas Pipeline

Project enshrines energy monopoly of Chevron and Shell in the region.

By [Friends of the Earth International](#)
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NEW AFRICAN GAS PIPELINE WORRIES CIVIL SOCIETY

ACCRA (GHANA) September 9, 2005 - Civil society groups from West Africa met in Accra today, just two weeks after the construction of the West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP) began off the Ghanaian coast.

The groups warned that the pipeline project and the so-called WAGP Treaty seriously undermine the national sovereignty of Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria and subvert these countries' rights to seek alternative energy options. At the same time, the project enshrines the energy monopoly of oil giants Chevron and Shell in the region.

The groups maintain that the pipeline project risks prolonging ongoing conflicts in the oil and gas-rich Niger delta in Nigeria.

Representatives from communities living near the pipeline route in Nigeria and Ghana report that they have not been properly consulted, suggesting that the World Bank, one of the main project financiers with its 40 million USD guarantee, may be violating its own commitment to invest only in projects that have broad community support.

According to Asume Osuoka of Friends of the Earth Nigeria/Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria, "The compensation¹ available to displaced community people in Nigeria is a mockery, as low as USD 20. This constitutes a gross violation of livelihood security."

The West African Gas Pipeline, one of the region's largest trans-boundary investments, is projected to cost 617 million USD and will ultimately transport gas from Nigeria through Benin and Togo to Ghana.

The World Bank and project sponsors like Shell and Chevron claim that the pipeline will contribute to putting an end to dangerous gas flaring in Nigeria, that it will provide cheap energy, and that it will promote regional integration.

However, to date there is no evidence to supports these claims, according to Friends of the Earth International, the world's largest grassroots environmental federation.

Gas flaring, the burning of natural gas associated with oil extraction, has gone on for decades in the Niger Delta despite the fact that it is a human rights, environmental and economic disaster [1].

Shell, Chevron and the World Bank claim that the West African Gas Pipeline will channel

away 'associated gas' from existing Nigerian oil fields where it is now burned, but environmentalists are unconvinced.

According to Asume Osuoka of Friends of the Earth Nigeria/Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria, "In the current plans, there is no evidence of the intention to capture associated gas from existing oil fields, which leads us to believe that gas would be sourced from new gas fields and increase existing problems in the Niger Delta."

In Nigeria, 66% of the population lives below the poverty line and the benefits of nearly half a century of oil production have flowed almost exclusively to oil multinationals and corrupt local elite.

Civil society representatives also do not believe that the pipeline would provide cheap energy or promote regional integration.

According to Noble Wadzah of Friends of the Earth Ghana, "The West African Gas Pipeline contracts lock our country into a long-term costly energy supply. The ordinary Ghanaian citizen or small business may not be able to access this energy, which is primarily destined for large businesses."

Some Ghanaians think that long-time tensions in the Niger Delta would render the gas supply unreliable.

"Gas coming from the Niger Delta, an area of social conflicts and environmental tragedies, could hardly be the basis for the sound integration of our region. This project is more likely to foster regional disintegration and social and political tensions in West Africa," said Noble Wadzah.

"Energy must be available not just for the elite and industry, but also for everyone else who needs it, especially rural communities," he added.

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[1] The gas flaring report is available online here: <http://www.climatelaw.org/gas.flaring/report>

PICTURES

High-resolution photos of scenes of gas flaring in Nigeria can be freely downloaded at <http://www.idspicturedesk.com/picturedesk/l?k=icn85ZN347-49423&u=aGO>

<http://www.idspicturedesk.com/picturedesk/l?k=Om4Noo55XK-66585&u=yFf>

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