

# COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ADVOCACY GROUPS (CEMAGs)

## Summary Information



Picture of CEMAG members in a 3-day Capacity Development Workshop

## **Introduction**

The discovery of oil and gas in commercial quantities in Ghana in 2007 raised expectations of further progress in the country's economy in view of the enormous opportunities from oil exploitation and production such as; revenues, petrochemical industry development, job creation and poverty reduction and even further estimation of over 5% contribution to GDP. However, the major challenge for Ghana's oil and gas development is to avoid the "*resource curse*" by managing the environmental degradation associated with the resource exploitation as well as ensuring maximization of benefits of Ghanaians among others.

Against this background, FoN was inspired to support on-going efforts to promote good governance in the oil and gas sector through; transparency, accountability and proper environmental stewardship using citizens' engagement with governments and companies. This culminated in the formation of Community Environmental Monitoring and Advocacy Groups (CEMAGs).

## **CEMAGs**

The Community Environmental Monitoring and Advocacy Groups (CEMAGs) has objectively the greatest interest of promoting sustainable development from the oil resources, by engaging with other stakeholders to ensure that the economic and socio-environmental concerns of host communities are addressed adequately by policies and their implementations. The CEMAGs also serve as a platform to monitor the implementation of the mitigation measures contained in the EIS of the oil companies and also monitor the corporate social responsibility projects of the oil companies at the local levels to ensure that they address actual community needs. Principally, the CEMAGs serve as permanent community voices to report on issues of; human right abuses, poor conducts of companies and regulators and environmental pollution.

## **CEMAGs Membership**

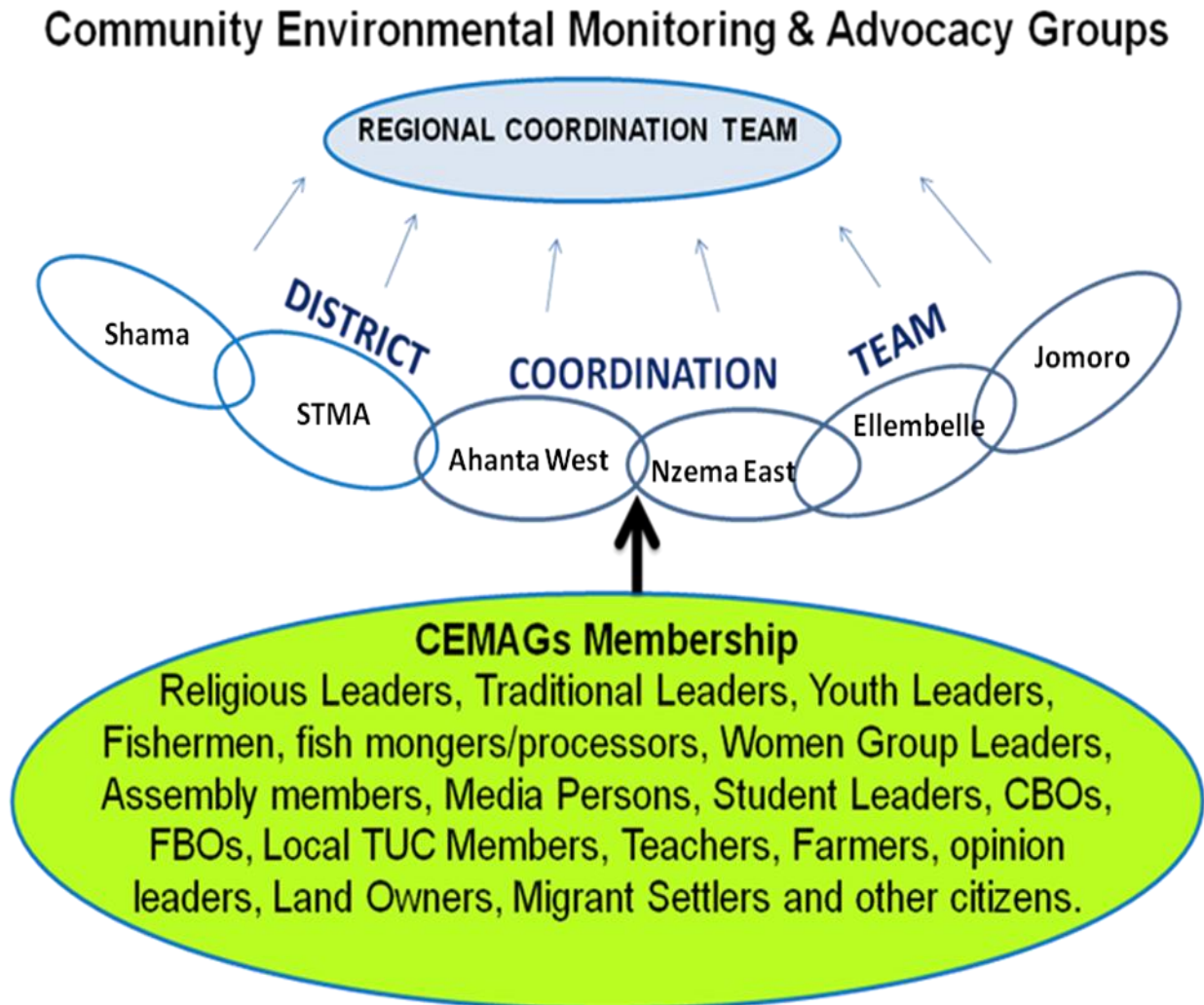
The CEMAGs are made up of; Religious Leaders (Christians and Moslems leaders), Traditional Leaders, Youth Leaders, Fisher folks, Women Group Leaders, Media Persons, Student Leaders, CBOs, FBOs, Local TUC Members, Land Owners, Migrant Settlers and other citizens.

CEMAGs have been formed in the six coastal and oil host districts in the western region notably; Jomoro, Ellembelle, Nzema East, Ahanta West, Sekondi-Takoradi and Shama districts.

Since their formation in 2009, the capacity of CEMAGs have been continuously built in areas of advocacy, community mobilization, Petroleum policies and legislations, the social and environmental impact of oil and gas industry, utilisation and tracking of oil revenues among others. In addition FoN has facilitated the participation of CEMAGs in national and international

dialogue on oil and gas issues. Through these capacity building sessions and networking platforms CEMAGs have chalked some successes.

**Fig; CEMAGs Structure**



**Questions and Answers about CEMAGs**

**Q:** *How does CEMAGs work link to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?*

**A:** CEMAGs work in the coastal districts of the Western Region is linked to the MDG 1 and 7.

**MDG goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.**

The CEMAGs are working towards the protection of community livelihoods (fisheries, farming, etc) to specifically avert poverty and hunger through engagements with stakeholders to ensure that; fishermen are protected and their rights to livelihood is respected by Government and oil investors, also that farmers are protected and the lands acquired for petroleum installations/ facilities have minimum impact on food security in the coastal areas and the due process is followed. (Adequate payment of compensations, provision of proper mitigation measures, etc).

**MDG goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.**

The CEMAGs having worked with FoN and partners to conduct environmental baseline studies in the coastal district are being strengthened to monitor (environmental changes), report and advocate on petroleum pollution including oil spillages, leakages, Ballast water discharges, gas flaring, chemical pollution and others. Some selected CEMAGs are being support by FoN to carry out restoration of mangroves through replanting of mangroves in wetland areas to improve the wetlands environment. Some CEMAGs members are already carrying out sanitation activities (regular cleaning of beaches, engage with District assemblies to enforce bye-laws on sanitation) to ensure environmental sustainability in their districts.

*Q: How many CEMAGs have been established?*

A: There are six (6) CEMAGs established, one for each of the six coastal districts of the Western Region; notably Shama, STMA, Ahanta West, Nzema East, Ellembelle and Jomoro district CEMAGs.

*Q: What is the membership and structure of each District CEMAG?*

A: The CEMAGs are made up of representatives from identifiable groups specifically: Religious Leaders (Christians and Moslems leaders), Traditional Leaders, teachers, lecturers, Youth Leaders, Fisher folks, Women Group Leaders, Media Persons, Student Leaders, CBOs, FBOs, Local TUC Members, Land Owners, Migrant Settlers, etc. Now for each district the membership ranges from 30 to 45 members with a district coordination team of between 5 and 9. The coordination team coordinates the district activity of the CEMAGs. The Regional executives' team is made up of 5 representatives from each of the district to total 30 regional reps.

*Q: What has been the work of the CEMAGs and what is their experience?*

A: Over the period of their establishment the CEMAGs have been facilitating community sensitization forums on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes and procedures; they carried out community durbars with the support of external resource persons to sensitize local people on EIAs and mobilized people to make inputs for the public hearings in the Western Region. CEMAGs have been mobilizing community members to engage government reps during the consultations on the oil and gas policies (e.g. local content, Petroleum exploration, etc) in the coastal districts. Other activities of CEMAGs are as follow:

- i. CEMAGs engaged stakeholders in the western region on the Petroleum Production and Exploration Bill and submitted a memo to parliament. This memo was considered by parliament and the national CS oil & gas platform supported the CEMAGs to defend this memo at the parliament house.
- ii. CEMAG members have been providing field assistance as data collectors for research work related to the oil & gas.
- iii. Two CEMAG members were supported by FoN & partners on an oil & gas study tour to USA during the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. These two members have been sharing their experience through presentations to; the traditional council, community stakeholders, schools, churches, mosques, etc. to increase knowledge on oil & gas.
- iv. Some CEMAG members have been representing their districts at national level CSOs meetings to project the concerns of the districts. Also members have been involved in radio & TV programs as panel members to sensitize and engage stakeholders on the oil and gas issues.
- v. Over the period some CEMAG members have also used their various platforms (as leaders of identifiable groups) to disseminate national policies and also produce feedback for national level engagements.
- vi. CEMAG members provided quick information on oil related spillages/leakage to partners; e.g. the mud spill by Kosmos Energy was reported by CEMAG members at the earliest hour of the spill. Oil leakage of Goil installation tanks into the sea near New Takoradi were also reported by CEMAG members to EPA, the media, FoN and other partners.

**Q.** *How are the CEMAGs networked at the national level?*

**A:** CEMAGs are members of the National Civil Society Oil & Gas platform. The CEMAGS therefore provides an extended presence of the national platform at the grass root level; they provide local level information on oil related activities and engagements with oil companies and implementation of national policies at the community level, they also share community concerns and impacts of the industry at the community level to the national platform. The CEMAGs also act as eyes & ears at the local level to monitor oil and gas activities and report to the national platform and other partners for informed advocacies. The CEMAGs also act as dissemination medium to the communities on emerging issues and policy dialogue on oil & gas and is already working with the National platform to sensitize stakeholders.

**Some CEMAGs success stories.**

**CEMAGs engage Tullow oil on excessive gas flaring**

In March 2011, some fishermen in Axim who have been fishing around the period reported of swollen eyes, headache, skin irritation and rashes. Others in Half Assini also complained of the same plight. Some of the fishermen believed it was a result of the offshore oil and gas operations.

Two Axim CEMAGs members, reported the incident to officials of Tullow oil (unit operator of

the Jubilee field). A few days later, the Tullow team led by its CSR Manager visited the community and interacted with the people concerning the reported incident. Present at the meeting were the Chief of Apewosika, Chief Fisherman of Apewosika, CEMAGs members and other residents including the victims. Having benefited from trainings on the impacts of the oil and gas industry, the CEMAG members attributed the incident to gas flaring. The Tullow team promised to investigate and give feedback.

Two weeks afterwards, the Tullow team led by Ken Madjid came back to Axim and confirmed that there has been excessive gas flaring from the FPSO and this can be linked to the reported cases. The team was accompanied by medical personnel who screened the victims and other community members and offered them medication.

### **CEMAGs facilitates citizens' participation in District Development Plans in Jomoro**

From June to September, 2011, six CEMAGs members were part of a team from FoN, KITE and Jomoro District Assembly that facilitated citizens' participation in the preparation of the Medium Term Development Plan (2010-2013) in the Jomoro District. This was achieved through Participatory Community Interactions, Public Hearings and Validation workshops to solicit citizens' development priorities into the MTDP. The Participatory Community Interactions were conducted in twenty communities, while the Public Hearings were done in all the ten Area Councils in the District. After these two events, a two-day workshop was held to validate and adopt the document.

The exercise which was the first in the District created the platform for citizens to be abreast with the content of the MTDP and subsequently make their inputs. At the end of the day the exercise contributed to

- Revision of the MTDP to reflect the needs of the citizens
- Preparation of Participatory Community Development plans in twenty communities
- Increased citizens' awareness of the content of the MTDP
- Increased participation of citizens (about 1,300 people) in the preparation of MTDP
- Empowered citizens to monitor the performance of the Assembly in executing the projects in the MTDP as well as demanding accountability.

### **CEMAGs undertakes monitoring of District Assembly revenues and expenditures**

Following the successful facilitation of citizens' participation in the preparation of the MTDP of Jomoro District, CEMAGs have stepped up its activities to include monitoring and tracking of Assembly revenues. This activity is aimed at promoting accountability and desirable reforms in the management and utilisation of local government revenues through participatory monitoring and evaluation by civil society actors. So far, 11 members including a District Assembly Official have trained on participatory monitoring and evaluation as well as a simple budget monitoring and tracking tool. Administering of questionnaires to elicit information on revenues and expenditure from relevant District Assembly officials has commenced. The results of the monitoring will be used as an evidence-based advocacy engagement, to hold the District Assembly to account for the use of revenues by increasing access and utilisation of development programmes and projects to enhance the overall attainment of poverty reduction.

**CEMAGs advocate for legislation of marine pollution law and allocation of oil revenue for the development of coastal communities and.**

CEMAGs in the six coastal districts have advocated the allocation of more oil revenue to improve the infrastructure and social services in coastal communities, as well as the legislation of a marine pollution law to protect marine resources.

The groups indicated that since the discovery of oil and subsequent production, a number of environmental pollution has occurred. Among these are, spillage of drill mud, death of whales, disposal of toxic waste in the sea, pollution of beaches by tar balls. They expressed that despite these incidents no companies have fined as well as compensations paid to affected communities. They therefore urged EPA, MEST, Petroleum Commission, Parliament and other state agencies to ensure adequate laws are promulgated to protect the marine environment.

In addition, the groups expressed disappointment that no significant projects have implemented in the frontline coastal communities from the oil revenue, one year after production. Their sentiments were expressed based on facts from the 2012 budget statement which indicates that as at September 30, 2011, an amount of US\$112.0 million, equivalent to GH¢168.0 million had accrued as Annual Budget Funding Amount. However, no major project was declared to been implemented out this amount in coastal communities fronting the Jubilee field. The groups therefore called for equitable distribution of the oil revenue to prevent the bad example of the Niger Delta.

These calls were made during community sensitisation durbars organized by FoN in all the six coastal districts to discuss emerging issues, as well as create awareness on the policies, legislation and revenue allocations one year after oil production. The durbars were attended by District Assembly officials, traditional rulers, religious bodies leaders, fisher folks, farmers etc.