
Engaging Stakeholders in Nigeria's Niger Delta

The history of oil production in Nigeria's Niger Delta has been marked by highly contentious relationships between oil companies and host communities, often leading to interrupted operations and violence. Since 2008, CBI has been working with Chevron Nigeria Ltd. and its stakeholders in oil-producing communities to improve and strengthen these relationships.

Chevron engaged CBI to lead an innovative, participatory evaluation of the oil company's largest community engagement program. The evaluation laid the groundwork for a productive, informed renegotiation of community agreements. At the request of community stakeholders and Chevron, CBI is now facilitating the actual renegotiation process. ([Download](#) this story as a PDF case study.)

Participatory Stakeholder Evaluation

From June through August 2008, a diverse group of community, government, NGO, and company representatives came together to conduct an evaluation of a core component of Chevron's community engagement strategy in the Niger Delta. This Participatory Stakeholder Evaluation analyzed the Global Memoranda of Understanding (GMOUs) that, for three years, had governed many aspects of Chevron's relationship with communities impacted by onshore oil operations.



The stakeholder group developed the goals of the evaluation, a data collection strategy and interview protocol. A data collection team then used the protocol to conduct interviews and focus groups with more than 1,000 individuals in all five Niger Delta states where GMOUs are in effect. The evaluation group reconvened to analyze the data and draw conclusions collectively.

CBI led the facilitation of this participatory process and prepared the evaluation report. The process and report provided credible, public information for future decision-making and improvement of the GMOU process.

The participatory process also improved strained relationships. The evaluation group expressed a strong willingness to continue using dialogue and joint problem solving to strengthen the engagement between Chevron and its Niger Delta stakeholders through the GMOU process.

Assisted Negotiation

At the request of all stakeholders, CBI returned to Nigeria in December 2008 to begin facilitating the actual renegotiation of the GMOU agreements in partnership with a local non-profit, the New Nigeria Foundation (NNF). This partnership aims to help NNF facilitate this and future negotiations by itself.



CBI's unique process brought parties together for joint training in the Mutual Gains Approach to negotiation, followed by joint identification of the issues for negotiation. CBI then facilitated separate preparation sessions in which parties applied tools from the training. Finally, the parties came back together for structured and facilitated negotiation sessions.

The first of eight GMOU agreements was successfully negotiated in early 2009. The ongoing renegotiation process is already showing substantial benefits:

- Community leaders have reported substantially greater trust in the process—because of the involvement of a neutral facilitator and the process guarantees put in place to ensure follow-through.
- Agreements are being reached more quickly and efficiently, in a matter of days and weeks as opposed to months.
- Agreements are more comprehensive in nature—creating more value for all stakeholders, exploring more options and meeting more of the interests of all stakeholders.
- Perhaps most importantly, the negotiation process is serving to strengthen the relationship between Chevron and the communities.



The positive outcomes of this process result from the extraordinary hard work, insights, and commitment of stakeholder participants, as well as the leadership of Chevron Nigeria Ltd. and Chevron's Community Engagement Advisors.

For more information on CBI's work in the Niger Delta, please contact [David Kovick](#), [Merrick Hoben](#), [David Plumb](#), or [David Fairman](#) or call (617) 492-1414.