



# NIGERIA SOCIAL ENTERPRISE REPORT

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International Edition

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Shaping the Future through

# INNOVATIVE

# Value Creation:

Making a World of Difference



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# THE NIGERIA SOCIAL ENTERPRISE REPORT 2013

Shaping The Future Through Innovative Value Creation: Making A World of Difference

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## Kenaf utilization: Sustainable strategy for community integration in oil spill clean-ups in Nigeria's Delta

**Morufat Balogun** and **Idris Musa** discuss an indigenous strategy developed to address the challenge and impact of oil spills in Nigeria's oil rich Delta region and to involve the affected communities in the clean-up of their living environment. They note that "the use of plant material as an absorbent" is a recognized biological method for cleaning oil spills and further explain how the bast and core fibres of the Kenaf plant (*Hibiscus cannabinus*) are effective in achieving this.



### Endowed Delta

Oil spills are a global challenge, and the Niger Delta has had more oil spills than anywhere in the world. The Niger Delta is one of the world's largest wetlands covering over 20,000km<sup>2</sup> and is one of the most endowed deltas in the world in both human and material resources. However, Nigeria has over 4,835 reported incidents of oil spills.

Significantly a vast majority of these spills (about 1.89 million barrels out of 2.4 million barrels) occurred in the Niger Delta between 1976 and 1996). The largest spill, Bonga spill covered an area of more than 923 square kilometres, and no less than 40,000 barrels of crude was spilled into the Atlantic Ocean in 2011.

### Clean-up

In cleaning oil spills, the use of oil dispersants is commonest, but poses serious toxic effects on plankton thereby poisoning marine animals, which could lead to food poisoning and loss of lives. In addition, dispersants have

little effect on very viscous, floating oils. Burning the oil in situ is another option, which leads to the formation of, and possible sinking of extremely viscous and dense residues. This is in addition to safety concerns and dangers associated with the act of burning.

Safer, biological methods like coating surfaces with biological polymers to prevent oil adhesion,

**Bonga spill covered an area of more than 923 square kilometres; and no less than 40,000 barrels of crude was spilled into the Atlantic Ocean in 2011**

using bio surfactants to clean oiled surfaces and addition of materials to encourage microbiological biodegradation of oil (Bioremediation) have been advocated. Considering the large area to be cleaned, use of biological polymers and bio surfactants are impractical while bioremediation is not a rapid clean-up process and visual effects may not be seen for a minimum of 15 days after treatment.

In spite of the massive oil spillage that has threatened the very roots of existence of the oil-producing region of Nigeria for so long, the current solutions proffered pose environmental hazards, without adequately integrating communities into clean-up schemes. Consequently, there has been continuous loss of plant and animal

**Considering the large area to be cleaned, use of biological polymers and bio surfactants are impractical while bioremediation is not a rapid clean-up process**

life and conflicts.

Oil companies claim to be implementing bioremediation activities but indigenes largely refute these claims. More importantly, records of spillage clean-ups and how much is yet to be cleaned are sparse. Indigenes of the Niger Delta, particularly the elders, have therefore requested for community involvement in clean-up activities so as to bring peace and improved livelihoods for the future generations.

#### **Kenaf Hibiscus**

The use of plant material as an absorbent is another biological method for cleaning oil spills, and the bast and core fibres of the

**Kenaf fibre is non-toxic, nonabrasive and is more effective than classical remediants, like clay and silica**

**Figure 1. Kenaf Plant and flowers**



Kenaf (*Hibiscus cannabinus*) plant are effective in achieving this. Kenaf fibre is non-toxic, nonabrasive and is more effective than classical remediants, like clay and silica. In the U.S, India, China, and Australia, Kenaf is an industrial crop used for acoustic tiles, automobile industries, animal bedding, vegetable and fuelwood. Besides, it is also used as an absorbent.

Kenaf is a low-risk cash crop whose cultivation requires minimal chemical applications and helps to alleviate global warming by absorbing carbon dioxide gases due to its rapid growth rate. However, Kenaf has been grossly underutilized in Nigeria. The local name of Kenaf is Rama in most parts but also Akon in Nasarawa and Ngabai in Adamawa State.

Farmers grow Kenaf mostly in their home gardens and in some cases intercropped with sorghum, roselle or okro. The Kenaf bast is actually used to tie harvested stems of sorghum prior to processing.

However, the leaves are also very important to the farmers, as they are consumed in vegetable soups and stews. Even the seeds are used for making a fermented product called “*Dadawa*”. The inner core of the stem is also used to make potash. Both are used as condiments in soups.

A farmer in Yola South local government of Adamawa State made his income from sale of Kenaf; he sold the stem as ropes, the leaves as edible vegetables and the core as potash. However, our survey indicates that Kenaf is becoming extinct in Nasarawa State and there is a need to find other ways to add value and encourage farmers to cultivate it.

### Community integration

In 2011, the United States Alumni Engagement Innovation Team’s: “Kenaf Clean-up: countering oil spills in the Niger Delta with local plant” proposed integrating communities into cleaning oil spills in a safe and rapid bioremediation process using the stem of the Kenaf plant. The project set out to conserve Kenaf diversity in Nigeria, and up to 50 collections now exist in the gene bank of the Department of Crop Protection and Environmental Biology, University of Ibadan.

Also, in order to develop a community-integrated strategy for cleaning oil spills in the Niger Delta with Kenaf stem, a national stakeholders' workshop with the theme: “Clean the Spills: Going Green in the Niger Delta” was held in the University of Port Harcourt in 2012. Participants included the academia, farmers, media, civil society groups, government ministries, as well as departments and agencies of governments at all levels. Participants presented research on the use of Kenaf.

There were practical tabletop demonstrations of the use of the Kenaf stem in cleaning oil spills, although actual spill sites were not visited due to security and transportation logistics. The participants included Nigerian Content

Development and Monitoring Board; Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC); National Oil Spill Detection Response Agency (NOSDRA); Institute of Agriculture Research and Training (IAR&T), National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP); Federal Medical Centres in Owerri, Asaba, Yenagoa and Umuahia; Federal Ministry of Health; News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) and a host of other key stakeholders. In terms of numbers, 98 people attended. No oil company was represented in spite of the fact that more than 120 were invited.

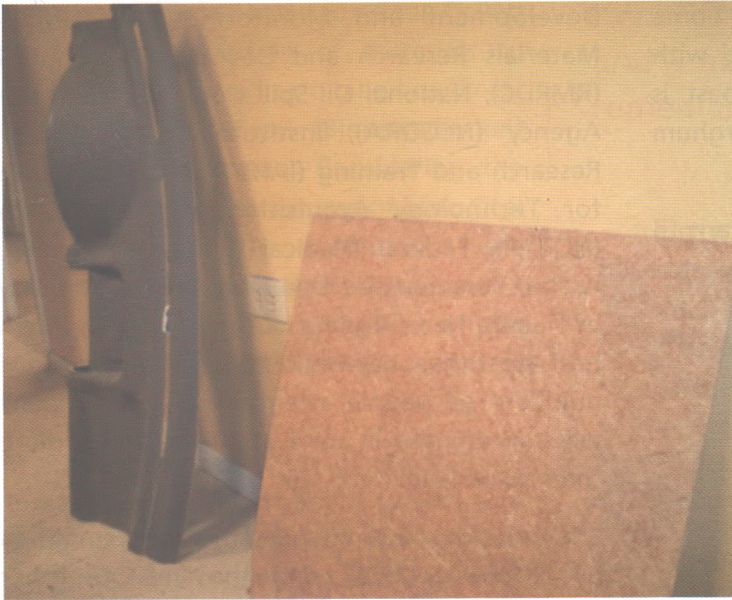
The workshop recommended that, as exemplified by NOSDRA, IAR&T and the RMRDC, other stakeholders in the oil industry should adopt the Kenaf plant as part of a sustainable community integrated strategy for oil spill remediation in Nigeria. The Kenaf plant can also be used as a cash crop to produce bricks, sound proofing material for soundproofing systems and as natural-fibre for automotive components (already adopted by Ford automobile in 2013). The Kenaf plant can also be used in thermal insulation, and to support green building.

Kenaf provides an opportunity for a wider community-centric wealth creation strategy using the farming expertise that exists in the communities.

Most importantly, the workshop encourages a pro-active engagement of oil companies in sponsoring the adoption and utilisation of Kenaf in local entrepreneurship and farm activities as part of a holistic community engagement strategy beyond oil spill remediation. Involvement of the health sector in oil exploration and spillage activities was recommended for the health and safety of the people.

The proposed strategy suggests a review of relevant laws and policies; especially the environmental and public health ones. The Land Use Act would also need to be reviewed especially as it affects ownership of land and oil spills in Nigeria. What is desired is a sustainable process that involves the people right from the grassroots and use of Kenaf.





*Kenaf crop in Texas.: Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF)  
Team collaborator, Dr. Charles Taylor*

It will be necessary for affected communities to inaugurate oil spill response groups that will work with the team. The team will in turn, focus on maximizing Kenaf yield per unit area in Nigeria and also support processing and accelerated value addition through local, national and international collaboration. Kenaf cultivation groups will have to be inaugurated in Kenaf producing areas of Nigeria while the team will conduct trainings on production and utilization of Kenaf, including value addition.

The strategy also calls for a community-centred monitoring and evaluation plan, regulation of the price of Kenaf and adequate involvement of the Standards Organization of Nigeria. Consequently, public-private partnerships will be encouraged and extended to local and foreign investors.

The workshop acknowledged the presence and support of the management and staff of NOSDRA (the lead agency in oil spill management in Nigeria) for the Kenaf project as part of its new strategy of promoting indigenous and locally initiated approaches to oil spill remediation. It was noted that such a policy will generate employment for youths in the Niger Delta and hence, provide an alternative to oil facilities' vandalism and other unethical practices some of the Niger Delta youths engage in.

It is believed that this home-grown solution will integrate and harmonize the interests of affected stakeholders in developing a clean-up strategy that will impact positively on the health, environment, industry and economy of the Nigerian populace, bringing peace and improved livelihoods for the current and future generations.

The team now has 45 members made up of 17 U.S alumni and 28 volunteers, highly distinguished professionals spread across Nigerian universities, research institutes and agencies. The project secretariat is the Department of Crop Protection and Environmental Biology, University of Ibadan.

Institutional partners on the project are: University of Ibadan; National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, Abuja; and the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Ibadan. More recently, the Raw Materials Research and Development Council has also become a partner



### About the project:

The U.S. Department of State has an Alumni Office coordinating all who have participated in U.S - sponsored exchange programmes. They created the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) for which the Nigerian team competed in 2011 and won \$28,000 which was used to implement the Kenaf Project



*Dried stalks being picked up, cut into 10-inch billet, transferred to wagon and built to modules for processing in the U.S.*

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