

Risk, Threat and Vulnerability in Ghana's Off-Shore Oil Sector

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Following the 2006 discovery of oil reserves in deep water off Ghana's west coast, an array of petroleum firms and offshore service providers have come to Ghana, and a host of Ghanaian firms have been founded or expanded to include the offshore sector. Oil exports began in 2010 and the country's main field produced about 85,000 barrels a day by the end of 2011. As part of the Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) Research Tutorial Abroad (RTA) program, our research team sought to better understand Ghana's response to this budding industry. In particular, the RTA pilot project served as an opportunity to explore issues related to risk, threat and vulnerability in the offshore sector. In three short weeks the team was able to undertake a broad survey of "risk" from numerous stakeholders engaged in the offshore sector. By utilizing a multi-sited methodology and the support of contacts at the University of Ghana, Regional Maritime University, and the Center for Democratic Development, the team was able to interview a diverse field of players, including government regulatory agencies, petroleum companies, not-for-profit organizations, training and educational institutions, and off-shore service providers.

The team first spent time in Accra interviewing individuals in high power positions, such as oil company executives, safety training operators, and governmental regulatory organizations. We sought to look at the oil industry from the regulatory perspective, as well as from individuals charged with overseeing broader oil operations. Ghana's regulatory branches played a very intensive catch-up game after the initial discovery of oil. By 2012, the laws and regulatory bodies seem to be finally solidifying and authority domains have largely been settled. A training institute has been created, allowing international and Ghanaian oil workers to take the industry-standard requirements on home turf. Visits to educational and training institutions introduced a variety of certification requirements for those working offshore. Safety and emergency preparedness training is one important way the industry seeks to minimize risk, threat and vulnerability. Observation of these training programs and reviews of safety procedures and protocols offered



an early entry point into an understanding of risk in the offshore sector.

In traveling to "The Oil City" of Takoradi, the team gained up close exposure to daily operations of on-shore oil contractors and security firms. We interviewed rig workers as they came on shore before heading home, either in Ghana or abroad. Rig workers were asked about policies and protocols in place to address and mitigate risk, threat and vulnerability. We learned that there are very strict policies in place regarding personal safety while offshore, and there are clear protocols for reporting any safety risks. Responses were mixed, however, when rig workers were asked about the effectiveness of such protocols. We interviewed local employment agencies to better understand the training experience required and how agencies went about certifying their employees' abilities. We visited the Takoradi harbor and spoke with individuals involved with maintaining the security of the oil rigs as well as the docking stations. We visited the coast west of Takoradi to observe the impacts of off-shore natural gas processing on fishing communities.

Our analysis of Ghana's oil in-

dustry demonstrates the convergence of infrastructural and institutional mechanisms to operationalize the industry. Complexity abounds as oil companies, training institutes, and regulatory agencies attempt to ensure security for this new industry. Our exploratory research on risk, threat and vulnerability in the sector yielded a number of avenues for future research. The preeminence of safety and of fostering a culture of safety on offshore rigs became apparent and is one potential avenue available for additional research. Equally interesting is the joint role of corporate and state actors in securing the rig operating environment and the challenges this poses for local fishers.

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