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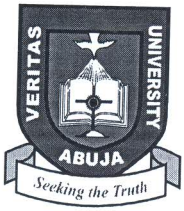
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It equally appreciates that opposing viewpoints and ideologies, which have shaped and are still shaping the understanding/misunderstanding of issues are legitimate in academic discourses. This is one of our responsibilities in a university and as scholars, our aim is the universalization of knowledge and cross-pollinating of ideas for development and human progress.

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Conflict, Co-Existence and Development: The Impact of Conflict and Civil Unrest on Niger Delta's Development

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Abstract

The main thrust of this paper is to explore the causes as well as the impact of conflicts and civil unrest on Nigeria's Niger Delta development as well as make recommendations on how the conflicts can be resolved or at least managed peacefully on a permanent basis. The study adopted a historic-structural and multidisciplinary approaches. Ethno-religious crises, political intrigues, contests for resources, struggles over identity, poverty, bad leadership, corruption among others are rife in Nigeria's Niger Delta and therefore developmental strides are significantly circumscribed. The paper concludes that conflicts and civil unrest have destroyed social cohesion and have had serious implications on economic development in the area.

Introduction

The major problem of Niger Delta Region began in 1914, when the British government amalgamated more than 250 ethnic groups and these ethnic groups differ, in some cases widely cultural, social and political orientation. The Northern part of Nigeria is dominated by the Hausa and Fulani, the Western part by the Yoruba and the Southern part by the Ibos among several other ethnic groups in the area. These different groups such as the Ijaws, Efiks, Ibibio, Kalabarin, Nember among others had seen themselves as people from different ethnicity. Nigeria since 1960, when it got its independence, has had many factors that had encouraged and promoted conflicts and civil unrests and therefore making co-existence difficult (enotes.com, 2018). These include tribalism, religious, crude oil exploration and land disputes among others.

Niger Delta Region as a region with approximately 30 million people as at 2016, with diverse interests has always taken the position of prominence in Nigeria. In recent times the Niger Delta Region and Nigeria as a whole has experienced frequent conflicts and civil

disturbances leading to loss of lives and destruction of property. There are many groups responsible for the conflicts and violence such as the Niger Delta militants, the herdsmen and the farmers, the politically motivated agitations by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOD), Bakassi peninsula conflict with Cameroon among others. Another form of conflict in Niger Delta region is recurrent communal conflicts over land and oil exploration. Most communities in Niger Delta region engage in communal clashes as a result of disagreements over land disputes or boundaries. This has caused a lot of deaths, destruction of property and displacement of people and communities from their homes resulting in such people being settled in Internally Displace Peopled Camps (IDPC) (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Forms of Conflicts and Civil Unrest in the Niger Delta Area

Civil unrest is a broad term that is used to describe violence, confusion, turbulence, riots, demonstrations and usually of a political nature. Civil unrest with disruption of economic and social life of people had characterised the activities of Militias among other groups. According to Osaghae, civil disturbance is a typical symptom of and a form of protest against a major socio-political problem. Some of the unrest could be as a result of ill feelings of citizens or a group of people. It has become a routine in Niger Delta region that most groups breathe violence in different parts of the region. Nigeria as a country had experienced a number of conflicts and civil unrests within the different parts of the country and this could be looked out in different dimensions (Osaghae,).

Conflicts and Civil Unrests in the Niger Delta region which is caused as a result of the neglect of the local people, by the various governments and the oil companies operating in the area. Since the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the civil rights activist, a man who stood and fought for the people. Militant groups have kept manifesting in different forms such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) which Ken was one of the earliest members and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) among others. The group initially had the aim of promoting peace, autonomy for the people, remediation of environmental degradation and economic development and they were interested in the cleaning up of the polluted land in the Niger Delta region, but they claimed the government was not responsible enough to their plight and so the group metamorphosed into a militant group. In 1993 Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People had a peaceful march of about 3000,000 people, this attracted international attention to the problems being faced by the people. It

also attracted the attention of the government who ordered the presence of the military in to the region. This conflict generated to the death of Ken Sra Wiwa and eight other members of Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni. The region has not known peace since that incident in the region.

Religion Conflicts and Civil Unrest: In Niger Delta there is three major religions, namely Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. Most of the religious conflicts are between Christians and the Muslims, but occasionally major conflicts could arise between factions of the same religion. For instance the riots in Kano that took place in 1st of May, 1953 was as a result of violence against the Christians even though the problem emanated from a political disagreement. Most of the people from the Niger Delta were affected in Kano (Nehi, 2013). The implementation of sharia or the Islamic legal system in the same parts of Nigeria resulted in a lot of controversies and conflicts between the Christians and the Muslims and this affected the people. They have also been reprisal attacks from the Christians against the Muslims in the southern part of Nigeria during some of the violent religious conflicts that Nigeria has experienced (Cutler, 2012).

Conflicts and civil unrests in Niger Delta are also closely associated with politics and elections. Elections in Nigeria especially have been characterised by conflicts and violence. Politicians, in their quest for power encourage their follower's even to carry dangerous weapons. This makes the teeming unemployed youths in the Niger Delta region to engage in violence against the opposition, especially during electioneering campaigns (Black, 2007). These conflicts come as a result of either dissatisfaction with electoral results within the party during primary elections or during major elections between the opposition parties. This has led to the massive destruction of property and loss of lives (Schurin, 1990).

Labour Union Unrest: Labour unions in the area have always embarked on strikes that most time have destabilised the economy. In 1942, many trade unions came together and became known as Federated trade unions of Nigeria. This body became an umbrella body for all other unions. In 1945 a major strike occurred as a result of the rising cost of living in Nigeria following the effects of the World War 2 and also because of the wage discrimination between the Europeans and their Nigerian counterparts (Oche, 2014). The Europeans were paid much higher wages than their Nigeria counterparts. This strike encouraged the eventual formation of the Zikist movement in 1946-1950. All these industrial actions with stoppage of work resulted in massive loss of revenue to the government

of the day and even slow down the economy.

It is pertinent to note that long before now in Nigeria conflicts and unrest had been in existence, for instances , the uprising of the Enugu Coal Miners in 1949 was another strike that almost completely halted economic activities in Nigeria. The miners refused to work, and this motivated the market women to march along the streets with machetes, knives and sticks in solidarity with workers, but the government reacted by asking armed policemen to maintain the peace and quell the strike. This action by the police led to 21 miners being killed and several people injured. This action infuriated people of the different regions in Nigeria, and several solidarity different riots occurred in different parts of Nigeria such as Aba and Calabar among other places (JollofRice, 2016).

Militias Unrest: in the Niger Delta there have been a lot of civil unrest and one of which is the Niger Delta unrest. The Niger Delta unrest is as a result of the exploitative tendency of the Multinationals Cooperation in the area. In recent years the Niger Delta peace and conflict landscape has under gone changes, when the Amnesty Programme for ex-militants began, but failure from the part of government has further encouraged unrest in the area. Government have not adequately put in place the modalities to enhance the programme, this still gives room for conflict between the multinational co-operations and the host communities, making different militant group to for stare conflict. This unrest has caused fatalities in place such as Ondo, Rivers and Bayelsa among other states (https:// piodfoundation.org).

Factors Causing Conflicts and Civil Unrest in Nigeria

Combinations of factors have been known to result to conflicts and Civil Unrest in the Niger Delta region. One of the major Causes is unresolved labour issues between the labour Unions and the government. In 2017/2018, the Non- Academic Staff Union of Universities went on Strike for over three months. This strike was as a result of the non payment of allowances of such staff. This strike affected all the university in the Niger Delta region and other parts of Nigeria.

There has been a lot of uprising in the area, because of the activities of the group a lot of economic activities have been hampered such as oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region. Some of problems of uprising most times are caused by those who are not employed or having tangible skills (Famuyibo, 2012). This is an area where government generates a lot of foreign exchange because of the oil and

gas reserves in the area. On October 1st 2010, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta masterminded the bombing of the Eagle Square during the Independence anniversary celebrations leading to the death of several people. Oil exploration activities have also destroyed the eco-system and agriculture which is the primary occupation of the people that would have engaged the teeming unemployed youths is now impracticable. The youths are therefore idle and are involved in several acts of violence and criminality. Some of these factors are caused by the unemployed youths (Adamu, 2011). The Niger Delta region is prone to civil unrest because of the activities of the exploration. (Newsom, 2018). The Multinational co- operations have contributed to the indigenous economic activities of the people, because the exploration of crude oil in the area has damaged the ecology of the area, making it difficult for the indigenes to cultivate their farm lands and this is largely a contributing factor to the civil unrest in the area (Osagie and Ezeani, 82-85).

Social Unrest: The Niger Delta region has experienced several social unrests especially with the oil companies because of environmental pollution from oil and gas exploration and the non-compensation of the people. The social unrests in the Niger delta region began in the early 1990s between foreign oil workers and the ethnic minority group called the Ogoni people as a result of exploration and exploitation of their land. These conflicts and civil unrests have continued in different dimensions, especially with the emergence of different militant groups.

Presently the herdsmen and farmers conflict has really caused a lot of violence in the different parts of Niger Delta region leaving several property destroyed. Within Nigeria, many communities, especially the farmers have been living in fear and uncertainty because they are not able to work on the farm due to insecurity and this is already creating food crisis in Nigeria. The problem of herdsmen in the different parts of the Niger Delta region have not been addressed by the Federl Government living the farmer with helpless.

Poverty: Poverty is another problem being faced by the people of the Niger Delta causing conflicts, violence and criminality. Poverty is a state in which an individual lacks basic things (Joshua, 2013, 103-104). In Nigeria people lack access to basic needs where there are no jobs, lack of good medical care, food, shelter and cloth among other can encourage conflicts and violence. The implication of this is because poverty is acute (Joshua, 106). It is unbelievable that a region endowed with abundant resources still remain in abject poverty without no poor power supply, good roads and water among others.

Marginalisation: This is an area concentrated with crude oil. A region known as "oil rich region" over the year has been marginalised by Nigerian government and the Multinational Co-operation in the area. Because of the coastal erosions and the spillage of oil which have kept the region unproductive. The instruments of government have not allowed the region to advance. The government because of the natural endowment, government most times intimidate the people, oppress and exploit the recourse that would have developed the area (John, 2018). The Niger Delta region among other regions in Nigeria is one of the most marginalised regions.

Conclusion

Conflicts and civil unrests have become a common occurrence in Nigeria because of religions, political, exploitation and social problems. Because of the large number of unemployed youths, it is therefore easy for them to get involved in social vices and criminality. The herdsmen and farmers conflict in Nigeria has added a worrisome dimension to the crisis. All these have led indirectly to reduce revenue to the government, worsening the economic situation in Nigeria. We need to co-exist meaningfully and properly manage our conflicts, before we can develop as a nation and people. The civil unrest in the Niger Delta region contributed largely from government and the multinational co-operations in the region

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