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# Oil politics in Nigeria

Niger Delta

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## Forward

The crisis in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is attracting increasing international attention due both to the growing security threat it portends for the Nigerian state and, particularly, its impact on international oil prices. Although the Niger Delta problem has been around for several decades, the emergence of organized and militant pressure groups in the 1990s has added a new dimension to the crisis in the region. Protests and the threat of outright rebellion against the state have become precariously frequent in the last decade especially.

Environmental activism and militancy are a direct response to the perceived official neglect of the region and the degradation of the natural environment by exploratory and other human activities. From a contemporary global perspective, the dramatic upsurge in violent confrontation and protests against the state and oil multinationals operating in the region in the 1990s, coincided with the end of the Cold War and the de-emphasizing of 'high politics' for 'low politics'.

In essence, 'soft' issues such as the environment, gender equity and equality, human rights, democracy and good governance have attained primacy on the global agenda. International concern over the crisis in the Niger Delta, including its attendant social and humanitarian implications, can be located in the context of this global attitudinal shift.

The internationalization of the Niger Delta crisis derives partly from the systematic publicity and struggle of the environmentalist, the late Ken Saro-Wiwa. Saro-Wiwa not only succeeded in directing the attention of the international community to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta but also – through sustained advocacy – paved the way for robust international/civil society engagement with the issues at the core of the crisis in the region. This fact has been illustrated by the intervention of organizations such as Amnesty International, Green Peace Movement, Rainforest Action Group, the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations. Such involvement effectively internationalized the Niger Delta crisis. More recently, the crisis has taken a new turn with increasing criminalization of the conflict, leading to questions as to why the problem is seemingly intractable and spiraling out of control. The spate of criminality (and possible external links to this phenomenon) has given rise to the question around the implications that the Niger Delta problem has for international (regional and global) peace and security.

This publication seeks to highlight how the Nigerian government can (re)gain the initiative in finding sustainable solutions to the problem. The book seeks to provide answers to these and other pertinent questions. The Niger Delta Development commission (NDDC), itself a solution provider in the matter at hand, is strongly committed to supporting every initiative towards bringing peace to the region. I sincerely hope that the book will contribute to public discourse that will further strengthen both the Federal Government and interventionist agencies efforts at addressing the plight of the local people of the region.

I therefore recommend the book to policy makers, both students and scholars, Africanists and all persons who are genuinely interested in the complete obliteration of the ugly conditions in the Niger Delta and the development of Africa. The book is squarely situated within the emerging and popular field of resources and their allocation in Africa.

Chibuzor Ugwoha

MD/CEO, NDDC

2010

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The views expressed in the chapters that follow are those of the authors and not necessarily of the institutions they are affiliated to.

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## Chapter 9

### Social and cultural impact analysis of oil exploitation production in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria

S.O. Aghalino and Lemuel E. Odeh

#### Introduction

The petroleum industry has continued to play a crucial role in the economic transformation of Nigeria. It remains the hub of the country's economic development accounting for growth and social transformation. As it were, the exploration for, and the production of oil and gas have impacted negatively on the environment of the oil-bearing enclave in Nigeria. Wide scientific consensus suggests that there is acute environmental crises in the oil-bearing enclave of the Niger Delta (World Bank 1998; Frynas 1999; Ashton Jones 1998; Human Rights Watch 1999; Aghalino 1999). It is worthwhile to note that this consensus dissipates on the magnitude of environmental degradation and by extension the plausible causative factors responsible for the environmental crisis in the region (World Bank 1998; Moffat and Linden 1995; Shell 1995; Imevbore, 1979, Odu; 1992 Idoniboye 1973;). While the environmental cost of the prospecting for oil and gas seem to have received some attention, little cannot be said for social and cultural consequences of oil and gas exploration and production on the people of the Niger Delta which is the focus of this paper.

#### The oil and gas scene in the Niger Delta

From a relative insignificant level of 20,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 1960 the production of oil peaked at 2,000,000 in the year 2000. The rise in production of oil in Nigeria was not revolutionary. Rather it was gradual and linear. From a somewhat high watershed in 1974 and 1979, there was a fall in production in 1980 (Table I below is succinct enough on this trend).

In order to positively induce increase in the production of oil in Nigeria, the Federal Government introduced a mouth-watering Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between her and the major oil companies in 1991 (Shell 1990). It would appear that the memorandum (MOU) was so appealing to the oil majors that there was marked investment in the up stream sector of the oil industry in spite of the fact that this period witnessed a high wave of political instability (Frynas, 1998; Frynas, 2000; Detheridge and People (Shell 1998).

The magnitude of the increase in the productive capacity of the oil firms could be seen in the fact that between 1992 and 1997, the number of producing oil wells in Nigeria rose radically from 1701 to 2251 (OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1997 and 1998). In the same vein, Nigeria's oil production rose from 1,950 (bpd) to 2,285 bpd.

TABLE 1: Nigeria Crude Oil Production, 1958-1997

| Year | Production in<br>(1000 bdp) | % Share of World :<br>total | Year | Production<br>in 1000 | % Share<br>world |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1958 | 5                           | 0.03                        | 1978 | 1895                  | 3.01             |
| 1959 | 10                          | 0.05                        | 1979 | 2,300                 | 3.50             |
| 1960 | 20                          | 0.09                        | 1980 | 2,055                 | 3.28             |
| 1961 | 55                          | 0.023                       | 1981 | 1,440                 | 2.43             |
| 1962 | 70                          | 0.27                        | 1982 | 1,285                 | 2.25             |
| 1963 | 75                          | 0.27                        | 1983 | 1,235                 | 2.18             |
| 1964 | 120                         | 0.41                        | 1984 | 1,390                 | 2.41             |
| 1965 | 275                         | 0.87                        | 1985 | 1,500                 | 2.61             |
| 1966 | 420                         | 1.22                        | 1986 | 1,465                 | 2.42             |
| 1967 | 320                         | 0.87                        | 1987 | 1,325                 | 2.18             |
| 1968 | 145                         | 0.36                        | 1988 | 1,445                 | 2.28             |
| 1969 | 540                         | 1.23                        | 1989 | 1,715                 | 2.67             |
| 1970 | 1,085                       | 2.25                        | 1990 | 1,810                 | 2.75             |
| 1971 | 1,530                       | 3.01                        | 1991 | 1,890                 | 2.89             |
| 1972 | 1,815                       | 3.39                        | 1992 | 1,950                 | 2.97             |
| 1973 | 2,055                       | 3.51                        | 1993 | 1,985                 | 3.01             |
| 1974 | 2,260                       | 3.86                        | 1994 | 1,990                 | 2.97             |
| 1975 | 1,785                       | 3.20                        | 1995 | 2,000                 | 2.95             |
| 1976 | 2,065                       | 3.44                        | 1996 | 2,150                 | 3.09             |
| 1977 | 2,085                       | 3.33                        | 1997 | 2,285                 | 3.16             |

Source: Frynas, J G (1999) *Oil in Nigeria Conflict and Litigation between Oil Companies and Host Communities* (London: Transaction Publishers).

From table 1, it is clear that Nigeria's share of the world's crude oil production appreciated from 0.03 per cent in 1958 to 0.09 percent in 1960. There seem to be a marked rise in the production of crude oil in Nigeria as from 1969 when production rose from 1.23 per cent to 2.25 in 1970 and 3.86 per cent in 1974. There was a fall in the country's production of oil to about 2.18 percent in 1983 and 1987, rising to 3.16 in 1997.

Apart from oil, natural gas production is becoming significant in Nigeria. In international comparison however, production of gas in Nigeria is relatively minute. For example, in 1997 the quantity of gas produced in Nigeria was about 4.3 million tones (oil equivalent). This translates to about 30 million barrels of crude oil. (Frynas, 2000; Eghre and Omole 1999; Okoroji, 1996). However, there has been an upsurge in investment in gas related projects in Nigeria. This is attested to by the completion and commissioning of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant in Bonny and other on-going construction of a number of gas plants. In the first one year of its operation, the \$508 billion Bonny LNG plant has exported three million tones of liquefied gas worth \$500 million (Federal Republic of Nigeria; Report of the special Committee on the Review of petroleum products supply and Distribution, 2000).

There are other latent gas projects. These include but not exclusive to; chevron's Escravos gas plant, and the Exxon Mobil's Oso plant. In addition, there is the noteworthy ongoing construction of the gas pipeline project linking Nigeria to other West African countries. Internally, there is small but significant



achievements recorded in gas utilization in Trans-Amadi Industrial Lay-out in Port Harcourt, Agbara and Onne Industrial Estates.

In fact, Nigeria is more of a gas province than of oil. This is seen from the massive reserves of natural gas which is estimated to be about 176.9 trillion standards cubic feet; made up of 91.8 trillion standard cubic feet (tscf) for non associated gas and 85.1 tscf for associated gas (Daily Times, (Lagos) Tuesday, January 2, 2000). While other OPEC member countries have attempted to diversify and invest heavily in the gas sector, Nigeria seems to be slow in this direction. To be sure, out of the 2 billion standard cubic feet of associated gas in flared daily while only 1.25 percent of associated gas is directly being used for commercial purpose (Federal Republic of Nigeria: 2000, Report of the special committee on the Review of Petroleum product supply and distribution).

Arguably, it could be contended that in the gas sector the Nigerian Government seem not to have put her bearing right as no deliberate effort has been made to affectively tap the nation's vast gas resource. Understandably, the exploration and production of oil and gas have impacted negatively on the environment. As stated earlier much attention has been focused on the negative externalities accessioned by oil bearing. Suffice to say, however, that the major negative impacts of oil and gas prospecting include but not exclusive to oil spillages and subsequent environmental pollution and gas flaring with the attendant climatic change and thermal pollution. (Coase 1960; Onwoduokit 1998). It would be an oversimplification of a very complex issue to ascribe the environmental crisis in the oil-bearing enclave solely to the activities of oil companies. The World Bank has shown the "Niger Delta as a whole faces more significant ecological problems than oil Pollution" (World Bank 1995). This position has been well articulated by Shell absolving itself from gross environmental crisis in the region (Shell Brief, 1995).

#### **Social and cultural impact of oil and gas production in the Niger Delta land acquisition**

It would appear a concise discussion of the social and cultural impact of the oil industry cannot be adequately tackled without perfunctory references to land issues. Oil industry activities are largely predicated on their unrestrained access to land because they derive their oil from the earth crust. The people of the oil-bearing enclaves on the other hand, depend on land to grow their food, fish and hunt. Land is central to the social system of the people of the Niger Delta as well as other parts of Nigeria. In this respect, clashes between the people and oil firms are inevitable.

The acquisition of land by the oil firms for pipelines rights of ways, flow lines, flow stations and gas flaring sites normally engender acrimony between oil firms and host communities. Shell for example has over 6,200 kilometers network of pipelines and flow stations spread over more than 31,000 square kilometers of the Niger Delta (Shell, 1995). Pipelines transverses footpaths and criss-cross, farmland and community ponds. These networks of pipelines disrupt foot communications and farming. They have also altered the pristine land tenure system of the people. Farmers could no longer engage in bush burning because of the presence of oil and gas pipelines, which are highly inflammable.

From the face value, it would appear that "land take" by the oil firms is insignificant. Shell for example claims that it uses about 400 square kilometer of land, which is about 0.6 per cent of the entire land of the Niger Delta. Most of the land acquired by Shell is for long term use, such as well sites, housing offices, but some for the short term only, such as seismic lines. As at the end of 1998, there was a total of 1,513 well sites within the company's operations out of which a total of 906 contained producing wells (Shell 1999) while the total land take may appear small in general terms, the effect of the land acquire can be serious on individual land holding as well as the community in general depriving them means of subsistence. A clear manifestation of the seriousness of the impact of land take on the people of the Niger Delta is seen in the incessant land disputes and the consequent litigation between individuals, groups communities and

the oil firms. In most cases, these disputes are fuelled by the quantum of compensation paid to land owners as well as payments of compensations to the wrong families (Fekumo, 1990).

Arguably, land disputes may occur due to ethnic conflict, but in some areas, oil firms aggravate existing land disputes because of their ignorance of existing feud. Closely related to the above, is the wanton degradation of the environment of the region and its attendant social and cultural impact. For the people of the Niger Delta, environmental quality and sustainability are fundamental to their well being and development. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), more than 60 per cent of the people in the region depend on the natural environment for their livelihood. According to a study carried out by a team of Nigerian and international environmental experts in 2006, the Niger Delta is 'one of the most world's most severely petroleum -impacted ecosystems'. It is reported that the damage from oil operations is chronic and cumulative, and has acted synergistically with other sources of environmental stress to result in severely impaired ecosystem and impoverished the livelihood and health of the regions impoverished residents (Amnesty International, 2009:14). As noted by Amnesty International, the people living in the Niger Delta have to drink, cook with, and wash in polluted water; they eat fish contaminated with oil and other toxins. The health of the environment and the lives of the people are intertwined with the health of the water system. The food, water and cultural identity of many local people are closely related to the delta ecosystem. More importantly perhaps is the fact that tens of thousands of families in the Niger Delta rely on fishing on inland rivers as well as offshore for both income and food.

#### **Devaluation of pristine cultural practices**

In the Niger Delta as in most parts of Nigeria when a woman gets married, her husband is required to give her a piece of land to farm. It is from this farm that she feeds her family and grows for food for sale in order to buy other staples. This tradition allowed the woman to enjoy a measure of economic independence. However, the constant land-take for oil activities, and the resultant pollution from the industry, has left the women in the region with no means to feed or support their families. Women have to go further away from home to find unpolluted water for their domestic chores (Dianna Wiwa). The health of the household has usually been dependent on the women, who common had specific knowledge of local medicines. She learned about the local cure during her 'fattening' room period. This starts after the birth of the first child and lasts for one year. During this period, she is not allowed out of the family compound. Besides being a time to rest, it is also a time of schooling when she learns how to look after her child and home. She is attended to by women from her family and older women in the community. As pressure grows on the young women, forced to deal with shrinking agricultural resources, very little time is left for them to acquire the specialized health knowledge traditionally gained through a fattening room period. For those who still practiced this tradition, it rarely exceeded two months after which they must return to farming (Diana Wiwa).

Lergborsi (2007) has shown that there is death and possible extinction of medicinal plants and herbs that are rooted in traditional medicine and spirituality of the people as a result of the incursion of the oil industry. The extinction is brought about by the fact that most of these herbs and plants are found in sacred groves, shrines and forests, which have fallen under direct destruction in the course of oil exploitation and the toxicity of oil pollution. Seismic workers, in the process of cutting lines, trees, shrines and groves are tampered with. As the case may be, even ancestral ponds are desecrated while detonating explosives for seismic data acquisition. This is done with outright impunity as the people are hardly paid farm gate compensation. As it were, under Nigerian Petroleum Law, *juju* shrines, sacred bushes and other venerated objects are

classified under 'Fructus Naturale'. Special permission is sought from the state authority before such objects could be destroyed (Etikerentse, 1985; Atsegbua, Akpotaire and Dimowo 2003)

### Moral bankruptcy

Aside from the land question, there is also the moral issue in the analysis of the social impact of the oil industry on the people. There is alarming evidence on the drop in morality in the region, which hitherto used various taboos to check social miscreants. It appears there is a scandalous and promiscuous social concubineage between oil company workers and girls in the host communities. The influx of comparative rich and almost "alien" workers from the affluent oil industry has escalated prostitution in previously "isolated" and stable communities (Tell February 23, 1998, Anigbo 1996). Ekine (1999:2) has confirmed that 'prostitution is on the increase and that in the Niger Delta many towns and villages have seen influx of male workers from other parts of Nigeria as well as a large expatriate community, and notes that the situation, together with poverty, illiteracy and lack of any alternatives has led many young girls into prostitution and are made to engage in bestiality by some expatriates (Adalikwu 2007;164; Semenitari, 1998; Brisibi 2001).

The argument may be made that the young girls are equally guilty since it takes two to tangle. But when one discovers the level of social awareness in the region, one would easily exonerate them. These are materially impoverished folks living far away from urban communities and hence ignorant of more dignifying means of livelihood after their farmland had been degraded by oil multinationals (Aghlino 1999). The teenage girls are attracted with steady flow of cash from their transient lovers and subsequently ignore going to school as it is seen as time wasting. It is therefore explicable why the young girls are highly susceptible to the 'oil men' who can lure them with little sum of money but which unfortunately appear enormous in the eyes of the girls (Tealony 1997:25). The prevalence of HIV and AIDS in the Niger Delta is among the highest in the country, higher than the average for Nigeria. The Niger Delta has an average prevalence rate of 5.3 per cent compared to the national average of 5 per cent. The impact of HIV/AIDS has been particularly harsh in the region. It is well known that the disease wreaks greater havoc where there is poverty, social inequality and general political marginalization. The weakening of livelihood and the social fabric in areas prone to oil exploitation creates additional problems in terms of care and support (UNDP 2006:316).

### Youth unrest

Available evidence suggests that there is an increase in youth unrest in the Niger Delta. In consonance with this, is the fact that opinion is also divided on the causes of youth restiveness. Olorun (2001:339-343) has attempted to distill the major reasons for the upsurge of youth militancy in the Niger Delta by analyzing the general synopsis of the issues in contention by various commentators. A common trend in the analysis is the fact that youth unrest is exacerbated by the incursion of the oil industry. In the early 1990s, youth in the Ogoni area disturbed oil operations on various occasions either on spontaneous protest or under the behest of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP), or by the prompting of the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (Naneen 1993; Osaghae 1995). The youth unrest in the area seems to have been predicated on their belief that they should receive great benefits from oil operations. They claimed that Shell operated 96 oil wells in the Ogoni area between 1958 and 1990. However, it is alleged that by 1993, Shell had invested only an estimated 0.000007 per cent of its oil revenue from Ogoniland in the area itself (Frynas, 1998 and Ogoni Bill of Rights, 1992). On the contrary however, Shell claim that it has certainly invested more

than this in Ogoniland. Shell alleges that between 1987 and 1993 alone, the company spent more than \$2 million on community projects in Ogoni area (Detheridge and People (Shell 1998:). As in Ogoni so it is replicated for the whole of the oil bearing communities who have been engaged in protest, in frustration about their inability to get a fair share of the oil revenue. However because of the inability of the oil companies to arrive at a democratic and workable approach to containing the restiveness of the youths in the Niger Delta, this has also pitted them against the Ijaws who accused the oil companies of collaborating with the Nigerian state to institute internal colonialism with a concomitant machinery of ecocide and economic exploitation (Ihonv bere 2000).

The Kaima Declaration, adopted by well over 5,000 Ijaw youth best articulate the demands of the Ijaw and the various Niger Delta people (The Guardian (Lagos) April 3 1999; ThisDay, Saturday January 16 1999). One of the high points of the declaration was the emphasis on resources control and the restructuring of the moribund Nigerian State. Most recently, the Chicoco Movement, an alliance of different ethnic groups staged a mass protest against oil Companies. Though peaceful, there was a consequent disruption of oil operations. The 1990s as it were recorded the worst cases of youth unrest that seem to have impacted on oil operations. The Shell example should give a general picture of the entire oil industry as shown in the Table 11 below.

**TABLE 11:** Alleged Community Disruptions to Shell Niger Delta Operations, 1989-1995

| Year                    | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992<br>1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|--------------|------|------|------|
| No of incidents         | 34   | 95   | 102  | 85           | 169  | 84   | 77   |
| Total Project days lost | 38   | 28   | 243  | 407          | 1432 | 1316 | -    |

Source: Frynas, 2000

From the Table, it is obvious youth unrest and the subsequent disruptions of Shell's operation were relatively insignificant in 1989. But the 1990s ushered in spate of incidents and the lost of projects days. While in 1990 Shell recorded 95 incidents and project days lost, by 1995 it reached an all time peak of 169 incidents and 1,432 project days lost. Specifically, some communities in the region were more involved than others in youth unrest and disruption of oil operations as shown in Table 11 below.

**TABLE III:** Alleged Disruption of Shell's Operations in the Western Division, 1988- 1997

| S/No | Community | Disruption | Percentage |
|------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 1    | Urhobo    | 102        | 30         |
| 2    | Isoko     | 53         | 16         |
| 3    | Ijaw      | 133        | 40         |
| 4    | Itsekri   | 36         | 11         |
| 5    | Benin     | 9          | 3          |
| 6    | Ibo       | 1          | -          |
| 7    | DOPCA     | 1          | -          |

Source: Fregene, P., 1998

In concrete terms Table 111 is explicit in showing the fact that the highest number of disruptions to Shell's operation took place in Ijaw land with recorded cases of 133 accounting for 40 per cent the of cases. The Urhobo follows this with 102 cases accounting for 30 per cent. The Ibo has the lowest cases of just one disruption. The limited incident in the Ibo area is easily explained in the light of negligible level of oil production in the area. In all, limited evidence seem to suggest that increase in relative poverty or increase in unequally lead to a rise in crime wave as well as youth restiveness (Bourguignon 1999; Ehrlich 1973). The need therefore to improve their lots probably explain why the youth in this area have been so restive.

We must note however that in spite of the obvious ease of political instability and disruptions to oil operation, it would appear that the oil majors are doing just fine as exemplified by their intense investment in the oil industry. Expectedly, this is curious because this runs counter to the held view that political instability is detrimental to businesses (Frynas, 1998; Daniels and Radebaugh 1999). In Nigeria, it would appear that, petroleum policy is usually unaffected by frequent changes in government. Sarah Khan (1994) has shown that Nigeria's oil industry provides evidence that changes in government in Nigeria had no significant impact on the operations of the oil industry. On the contrary, relations with the oil Companies provided the only element of continuity. Due to ravenous attitude of successive Nigerian government to oil revenue there is little petroleum policy instability. This observation is however not peculiar to Nigeria as this is replicated for El Salvador (Robock and Simmonds, 1989).

One other dimension to youth unrest in the region is that more militant youth groups are increasingly challenging leaders, who in the past were unquestionably followed. This has led to loss of societal values and the loss of traditional authority structures. In earlier times, youth were typically at the bottom of the hierarchy. Today however, traditional rulers and elders in the various communities have lost control over the youths. They have worked out their own largely unsustainable ways of reaching and dealing with the oil companies, government at every levels, and national and international organizations (UNDP, 2006:306). The point to note is that the spread of Western ideals of capitalism, the quest for money, and immediate gratification has overshadowed the respect for traditional authority. Consequently, in view of the impact of oil exploration activities, the deep sense of community, morality, social cohesion and solidarity hitherto enjoyed by the people is being eroded, making it easy for families and communities that have co-existed peacefully before the commencement of oil business to come into conflict with each other over oil royalty and ownership of land. Internal divisions within communities also seem to have increased, most frequently between the youths and chiefs, between youths and the communities' urban and local elites, between youths and professional claims agents, and

the community, as well as, between different youth groups. Interestingly, the youths play crucial role in the formation of factions. Thus, in most cases, the conflict is directed against the chiefs who are seen as the focal point of authority and patronage. Age grades were important institutions which helped to mobilize community energy and reinforce solidarity. The age grade also performed economic functions in the form of clearing bush paths as well as bailing of ponds. But with the advent of the oil industry, the pre-colonial and colonial functions of the age grades changed. Age grades are now used as forum for resisting the atrocious environmental regime of the oil firms. They galvanize themselves in presenting common front in the struggle for compensation from the oil firms. They organize and stage protests. In the extreme, they barricade flow stations, subtly engage in the sabotage of oil installations and recently engaging in outright kidnapping in order to obtain ransom. Discipline which was a hallmark of age grades when it was culturally regulated has now fizzled out.

Women's groups are also becoming more vocal with the emergence of women organizations, movements and groupings that engage in protests, production disruption and facility occupations. As rightly pointed out by Ikelegbe (2004:254), women in the Niger Delta who are aggrieved, impoverished, marginalized have keyed in into the struggle for environmental justice, accountability and fair share from the oil industry. The result is a complex and dynamic fragmentation of communities characterized by frequent power shifts. This makes it difficult to build relationship as well as negotiate compensations for land acquisition, damages and spills (Shell, 1995). The result is frequent disruption to peaceful community life and disruption of oil industry activities. Before the advent of the oil industry, youths unquestionably followed the dictates of the elders (Aghalino 1999). But with the realization of the wealth that could be from oil industry, traditional chiefs threw caution to the wind and began to assume the final point of authority and patronage by the oil industry. With time the youths discovered that they were colluding with contractors to falsely certify jobs completion in order to share a percentage of the contract sum to the detriment of their communities.

### Migration and displacement of people

Migration into and out of the Niger Delta during the pre-colonial and colonial periods were dictated by the need to farm, fish and trade (Otite, 1979; Aghalino 1996). The oil palm belt as it were, attracted people from the densely populated and agricultural land-lacking area of the core-east. The emergence of petroleum as major resource in the region introduced a new dimension to earlier forms of migrations. Oil industry induced migrations involve young men and girls in search of greener pasture in the major urban areas of the Niger Delta (Legborsi 2007: 11). Perhaps, it may be stressed that an urban-rural divide was already showing in the region by the time oil became a dominant feature of the Nigerian economy.

The oil boom years sharpened it with a consequent decline in rural population. Migration out of the oil-bearing enclave in the Niger Delta seem to be the major radical adaptable mechanism put in place by the people whose source of livelihood is threatened by oil spills and gas flaring. In point of fact, migrations in the Niger Delta are also informed by the wish to move elsewhere because of unbearable inflationary trend institute by oil field workers. Others are searching for opportunities to re-establish trading activities as a result of the lost of their farmland to oil pollution. It seems that Nigeria's oil boom has turned the "Petroleum producing areas to centrifugal centers of oil doom where people leave rather than live in" (Adeniyi, et al 1983). It is easily conjectured that the rapid migratory wave to cities and oil enclave had denuded the population of the Niger Delta, dislocated the active stratum of society and had consequently disoriented social networks that previously sustained a virile cultural life style in the region (Darah, 1995).

Decline in artistic and socio-cultural and religious performances illustrate the above development. Hitherto, the vibrancy in artistic life was a prominent feature of the Niger social outlook. An urban trend was already showing in the ND by the time oil became a dominant feature of the economy. The oil boom years sharpened it. Rural-urban migrations intensified with a consequent decline in rural population. The sharp decrease in rural population caused a decline in the number and frequency of annual or seasonal performances and observance of important cultural ceremonies, especially festivals. The cultural space lost to traditional festivals is now filled largely by elaborate obituary ceremonies. In point of fact, burial of the aged were always elaborate in the region as the forum was used to reenact culture and tradition. What is new is the conduct of funeral with in the light of carnivals even for young people. This has engendered cultural crisis as these burials entails extravagant spending, especially the 'spraying' of currency notes on the children of the deceased.

An adjunct to the above is that majority of the household in the region are now headed by women as a result of the migration of their husbands out of their villages. The result is that the jobs of caring for the family now rest on the women (Okoko 1998; Brink 1991:207). The influx of 'stranger' elements from other parts of the country and abroad has further diluted local cultures and safeguards. As for the environment and natural resources, this means that traditional arrangements for resource use and management have virtually broken down. Clan rulers, villagers elders and family heads can no longer be relied upon to enforce traditional practices, which have negative consequences for the environment (UNDP 2006:306).

One characteristic of the migrants is that most of them are out in search of paid employment. The trend has engendered a subtle proletarianization of the labour force in the region. Proletarianization in this context is applied to mean a shift away from self-employment mainly in agriculture to wage labour. It also suggest that small-holders are being pushed out of agriculture into wage labour; rather than being pulled by new employment opportunities (Jayaraman and Lanjonw, 1999). This new but flourishing trend in the region is probably a function of gross poverty in spite of the vast oil wealth in the region. Moffat and Linden (1995) have shown that the Gross National Product (GNP) per capital in the region is below the national average of US\$280. They assert that the high salary paid to oil workers cannot mitigate the stark poverty in this region, rather it only exacerbate it. Poverty in this region goes beyond the physical. It is also psychological as there is a total erosion of dignity and self-respect (Dunne, 1990).

The displacement of people and villages when oil spillages occur is another social problem occasioned by the oil industry. Indeed the spate of the oil-industry induced conflicts in the region is instrumental to the displacement of people. The point to note is that the link between unsustainable petroleum exploitation in the Niger Delta and the destruction of the indigenous homeland and culture is undeniable. Traditional land has been sacrificed at the altar of irresponsible oil practices. The displacement of Igolu village in Isokoland which result from the massive spillages in 1973 at Shell's location 13 and 18 had untold physical and psychological impact on the people. In the same vein, the September 1999 oil spillage disaster at Ekakpamre also in Delta state impacted negatively on the people. The spill not only destroyed rivers, wide expanse of agricultural land but also rendered the people homeless. In addition, the spill created a new surge of displaced person as well as environmental migrants. In the same vein, in September 2004, it was reported that at least 6,000 people had been displaced in several weeks of violence between local militia and security forces, as well as by infighting between militia (Opukri 2008:178). This surge was intensified with the Jesse fire disaster, which

claimed almost a thousand lives (Oil Times, June 2001; The Punch, December 7, 1998; 1999, Swain, 1996).

### Inflationary trend

The presence of oil field workers in the various flow- stations and locations in the Niger Delta seem to have negatively affected prices of goods and services. Oral evidence suggests that the prices of goods have skyrocketed beyond the reach of the common man. A situation, which is largely blamed on the activities of the oil workers. Apart from the fact the country's economy has been in comatose with a subsequent fall in standard of living; the workers seem to always have some extra cash in relationship to their local folks. Consequently, they often than not display their wealth in the market place. They are reputed to resent haggling with market women. Prices are acceptable by them without argument. Because they could easily afford prices they in this view set new price which are forced down the throat of the local people who groan at excessive and abnormal prices.

Apart from the inflationary spiral set off by oil workers, the market also experiences a scarcity of agricultural products since more people are abandoning their farms for wage labour and contract business in the oil industry. On balance, there is no denying the fact that the oil consequently has impacted on the people positively. The presences of oil workers in the region seem to have stimulated the growth of goods stores and refreshment centers. Some people with a knack for business have been able to plough back money realized from menial services offered to the oil industry to establish restaurants and cafes. By virtue of their interaction with some of the oil workers, they were able to capitalize on this to lure them to their "joints" to cool off after a hard day's job. Thus, it could be seen that in a way the money earned by the oil workers have a multiplier effects on the host communities. Above all, the social concubinage between host communities when it is economical could foster a sense of nationalism and integration as stereotypes and clichés are dropped because of deep knowledge of each other.

### Conclusion

This paper has attempted to evaluate aspects of the social consequences of the oil industry on the people of the Niger Delta. It is argued that social impact of the oil industry has received due attention from scholars. In order therefore, to appreciate the problem, we undertook a synoptic appraisal of the oil industry with a view of ascertaining its overall significance to the Nigerian economy. It is our conviction that for now the oil industry remains the hub of the nation's economy. The significance of the oil industry is not doubt as is widely acknowledge. Yet there is the extant and latent social consequence of the industry in form of high wave of inflation, moral bankruptcy, incessant litigation due to oil industry acquisition of land and emerging trend of environmental refugees and the social menace of youth occasioned by interrelated factors. While it could be concluded that the oil industry has attempted to perform some modicum of social responsibility, this has not gone far enough.

In this light, it is suggested the government, working in concert with the oil majors should put in place employment strategies that could adequately engage the youths. Besides, while the emphasis of the government and the oil industry is trying to mitigate the negative externalities from oil production have been economic, there is need for a carefully designed social network that could alleviate the problem of the people.



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