

Oil Exploration and Its Socio-Political Economic Impacts in the Nigeria's Niger Delta Region

Oluwasuji C. Olawole, PhD

*Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Political Science and Public Administration Department,
Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria*

Abstract: - Oil exploration and its socio-political economic impacts in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region: Since the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the late 1950s, the Niger Delta has become the cynosure of both national and international oil interests. The reason for this development is not difficult to fathom. The Niger Delta region accounts for 80% of Nigeria's oil industry. Apart from oil wealth, the Niger Delta is described as fragile and complex. This is due partly to its "vast interface between land and water", (World Bank Report, 1995: 436). It records very high rainfall annually and river flooding occurs intermittently, particularly during the raining seasons. When this is combined with the low, flat terrain and poor drained soil, the resultant flooding and erosion make land and land scarcity a vexed issue. The fragility and complexity of the geopolitical structure of the Niger Delta region has over the years been compounded by environmental degradation, particularly oil pollution attendant on oil exploitation that has rendered the region a wasteland. In the recent times, oil pollution has become an issue of serious concern to oil producing communities due to its deleterious effects on human and material resources of the people. In spite of the rich potential and abundant wealth the region is blessed with good agricultural land, fertile forest, excellent fisheries, as well as a rich reservoir of oil and other materials. Its future is however threatened by deteriorating ecological conditions that are not addressed by present policies and actions. This paper however made use of primary source of data collection and chi square in its analysis. It is observed that the socio-political economic impact of oil exploration is more that can be imagined, hence the need for proactive policy decisions/policies to tame the tide. An urgent and wholesome clean-up of the entire Niger Delta area where oil spillage has affected should be done without further delay. The paper also suggests that the oil producing companies should be made to be more responsible to their community social responsibilities to their host communities. They should as a matter of urgency made to curtail the present rate of oil spill and gas flare among others.

I. INTRODUCTION

Niger Delta is defined politically, administratively, functionally, geographically, ethnologically linguistically and culturally. Niger Delta is the largest wetland in Africa, and the second in the world. It covers an area of 70,000km square and consists of a number of ecological zones – sandy, coastal ridge barrier, brackfish or saline mangroves, freshwater, permanent and seasonal swamp forests and lowland rain forests. The whole area is transverse and criss-crossed by a large number of rivers, Streams, rivulets, creeks

and twenty estuaries – Forcados, Escravos, Benin, and Ramos in the western flanks and dodo, Pennington Digotoru, Middleton, Koluama, Fishtown, Sangana, Nun, Brass, St Nicholas, San Barbara, San Bartholomew, New Kalabari, Andoni, and Opobo (Azaiki, 2007).

Azaiki (2007:22-23) further posits that:

Some people define the Niger Delta in terms of its ethnography, as the region occupied principally by the Ijaw peoples together with a variety of smaller ethnic groups, including the Itshekiri, the Urobo and the Isoko peoples in the western part of the Delta... On the other and (sic), many Nigerians perceive the Niger Delta as synonymous with the oil-producing areas of Nigeria. In their own thinking, the Niger Delta is the same as the oil-producing areas. In other words, Niger Delta includes the following states: Abia, Imo, Edo, Delta, Rivers, Balyesa, Cross Rivers, AkwaIbom and Ondo states.

Ekpo (2004) submits that the Niger Delta lies in the southern – most part of Nigeria, stretching from the Nigeria – Cameroon boundary in the East to Ogun – Ondo states boundary in the West. The area is bounded in the north by Enugu, Ebonyi, Anambra, Kogi and Ekiti states, with the Atlantic coast forming the general boundary in the South. The Niger Delta comprises about 1,600 communities in nine states, namely, Abia, AkwaIbom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. According to PEFS (2004), this definition is political. This description which is synonymous to oil producing areas in Nigeria is a modern perception that has over the years been shaped or sharpened by developmental and administrative convenience. The quest of government and other stakeholders to conveniently administer, relate with or extend some entitlements to oil-bearing areas seem to be the main reason the area is so coined. The core Niger Delta was previously limited to a few states in the South-South geopolitical zone with commercial oil reserves and rivers which empty themselves to the Atlantic Ocean.

Oil has become more relevant in a context where oil is both the mainstay of the economy (since 1970s for over 80 percent of the government revenues and 90 percent of

Nigeria’s foreign exchange earnings), and the fiscal basis of the state. The economic and debt crisis whose immediate roots lie in the collapse of global oil prices in the late 1970s and early 1980s exposed the fragile economic basis of the Nigerian Nation and its unity.

The discovery of oil has brought both curses and woes upon the Niger Delta area. These have manifested in the preponderance of environmental degradation and hardship that is experienced daily by the inhabitants. At the Niger Delta, the social and environmental costs of oil have been enormous and monumental. They include the destruction of wildlife, and bio-diversity, loss of farmland and damage to aquatic ecosystems- all of which have caused serious health problem to the inhabitants of the area. About 75% of gas produced in the Niger Delta are flared annually causing considerable ecological and physical damages to other resources such as land/soil, water and vegetable. Life has made unbearable as a result of ‘gas flare’ and oil spillage. Between 1976 and 1990, about 3,000 oil spill incidents were reported by the oil companies operating in Nigeria; within this period, over two million barrels of oil spilled into the country’s territorial, coastal and offshore marine environment. Conjunctively, between 1982 and 1992, 1,626,000 gallons of oil were spilled from the company’s operation in 27 separate incidents. Shell admitted that there were at least 200 spillages of different sizes in a year in recent times (Agbu, 2005).

The formation of a film of oil in waters bodies adversely prevents natural aeration, resulting in the death of organisms tapped below the water surface. The drinking water, in a number of places in this area is heavily polluted. The contamination of ground water in the coastal environment is readily shown by the rise in the Millennium Permissible Concentration (MPC) of crude oil found in ground water. For example, the ground water in Port-Harcourt had MPC of 1.8 milligrams per litre in 1987 as against 0.1 milligram per litre recommended by the world Health Organisation (WHO).

These devastating environmental scourges, the fast deteriorating socio-economic condition and the attendant conflicts emanating there from increasingly threaten the future ecosystem in the area. Over four decades of oil exploration has brought little benefits to the communities. In commenting on the politics of oil in Nigeria, Adejumbi (2002:155) rightly posits that:

The politics of oil played a key role in this area, while oil which constitute the mainstay of the Nigerian economy, is sourced from the Niger Delta, the communities live in

squalor and abject poverty, lacking basic amenities like feeder roads, electricity, pipe borne water, and cottage industries. The general perception in the area is that their marginalization is related to their minority status in the Nigerian federation; that the dominant ethnic groups use the resources gained from the oil producing areas to develop their own places. The fact that oil producing communities suffer serious ecological and environmental damages in form of water and air pollution, destruction of aquatic life, and land degeneration suggest that the people of the area are confronted with enormous dangers.

The case of Niger Delta is associated with the biblical diction of “muzzling the ox that treads the corn”. Niger Delta produces the largest proportion of the nation’s resources and wealth, yet has nothing in term of infrastructure to show for it. This has led to various and degrees of agitations and demands by the oil producing communities. According to Suberu (1999), the demands can be identified under five broad themes. These relates, respectively, to the disposition of mineral land rents; the application of the derivation principles to the allocation of federally collected mineral revenues, the appropriate institutional and fiscal responses to the ecological problems of the oil-prospecting areas, the responsibility of the oil-prospecting companies to the oil producing communities and the appropriate arrangements for the securing the integrity and autonomy of the oil producing communities within the present federal structure (Suberu, 1999).

It is therefore the fulcrum of this paper to underscore the impact of the oil exploration on the Niger Delta. To help in this, a hypothesis will be raised and tested: oil exploration has no significant relationship or association on the development of the Niger Delta.

Hypothesis:

- Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between the socio-political economic implications of the Niger Delta questions and the development of the Niger Delta region.
- H1₁ There is significant relationship between the socio-political economic implications of the Niger Delta questions and the development of the Niger Delta region.

Table 1: Contingency Table with Chi Square on Respondents’ responses on Socio-political economic impacts of the Niger Delta Question

Question	Response	States			Total
		Imo	Bayelsa	Ondo	
Are issues in the Niger Delta that are having socio-political economic implications such as insecurity, poverty and low revenue income treat to the survival of Nigeria as a nation?	No	240	265	250	755
	Undecided	145	40	95	280
	Yes	520	685	605	1810
	Total	905	990	950	2845

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E}$$

$$df = (r-1)(c-1)$$

Cell a = (905)(755) / 2845 = 240.17

f = (950)(280) / 2845 = 93.50

b = (990)(755) / 2845 = 262.72

g = (905)(1810) / 2845 = 575.76

c = (950)(755) / 2845 = 252.11

h = (990)(1810) / 2845 = 629.84

d = (905)(280) / 2845 = 89.07

I = (950)(1810) / 2845 = 604.39

e = (990)(280) / 2845 = 97.43

Cell	Fo	Fe	fo - fe	(fo - fe) ²	(fo - fe) ² / fe
A	240	240.17	-0.17	0.029	1.203
B	265	262.72	2.28	5.198	0.020
C	250	252.11	-2.11	4.452	0.018
D	145	89.07	55.93	3128.16	35.120
E	40	97.43	-57.43	3298.20	33.85
F	95	93.50	1.5	2.25	0.024
G	520	575.76	-55.76	3109.18	5.400
H	685	629.84	55.16	3042.63	4.831
I	605	604.39	0.61	0.3721	0.000
Total X²					80.466

$$df = (r-1)(c-1) = (3-1)(3-1) = 2 \times 2 = 4$$

Research Decision

Calculated X² = 80.466

Critical X² = 9.49

α = .05

The X² - calculated value is greater than (>) the X² - critical value at df of 4 and a significant α of .05. It means that X² is significant. Thus the degree of association is applicable such that an association exist between the variables.

The results explained above revealed that the issues arising within the Niger Delta has serious socio-economic political implication for Nigeria. Based on these, the formulated null hypothesis 2 was rejected. Rather the alternate hypothesis which states that, the Niger Delta problems have serious socio-economic political implications on the people of the region is now accepted.

II. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Discussions of findings in relation to objective 1 and hypothesis 1

Oil and its Impact on the Niger Delta Question

Since the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the late 1950s, the Niger Delta has become the cynosure of both national and international oil interests. The reason for

this development is not difficult to fathom. The Niger Delta region accounts for 80% of Nigeria’s oil industry (Obi, 1995; Olojede, et al. 2000). This has made the region the gold mine of the country’s oil wealth. According to Khan (1994:40):

Since oil was discovered at Oloibiri, the Niger Delta basin has proved to be the most prolific producing area in Nigeria, containing seventy eight oil fields, including the largest, Forcados and Yoroki

Apart from oil wealth, the Niger Delta is described as fragile and complex. This is due partly to its “vast interface between land and water”, (World Bank Report, 1995: 436). It records very high rainfall annually and river flooding occurs intermittently, particularly during the raining seasons. When this is combined with the low, flat terrain and poor drained soil, the resultant flooding and erosion make land and land scarcity a vexed issue. The fragility and complexity of the geopolitical structure of the Niger Delta region has over the years been compounded by environmental degradation, particularly oil pollution attendant on oil exploitation that has

rendered the region a wasteland (Olojede, et al, 2000). In the recent times, oil pollution has become an issue of serious concern to oil producing communities due to its deleterious effects on human and material resources of the people. In spite of the rich potential and abundant wealth the region is blessed with good agricultural land, fertile forest, excellent fisheries, as well as a rich reservoir of oil and other materials. Its future is however threatened by deteriorating ecological conditions that are not addressed by present policies and actions (World Bank, 1995). The insensitivity of government at various levels and the oil corporations operating in the area, have created more tension and crisis that could, if not properly managed, threatened the peace and peace of the nation.

Environmental degradation in the Niger Delta is a composite of environmental problems, land resource degradation, renewable resource degradation and environmental pollution. In general, the exploitation of resources and primary production has affected the natural environment of this area. The major activities in the region are fishing, harvesting of natural resources and oil exploration. Fishing is largely subsistent. Available evidence also suggests that over fishing is taking place in some cases. Annual fish catch is said to vary drastically; but it is generally declining for both the artisanal and industrial sectors. The depletion of fishery resources is what is affecting the fish catch (Olojede, et al. 2000).

Intense agricultural activities in the Niger Delta are heightened by increasing population attracted by the oil industry. This is leading to the destruction of vegetation and wild life habitat. The extensive use of piece of land has resulted into soil erosion, soil depletion and exhaustion of soil fertility. Furthermore, deforestation and wild life depletion have also become common features in the Niger Delta.

The impact of these environmental activities is also complicated by petroleum exploration which is wildly and intensely exploited in the Niger Delta.

Table 2: Summary of January – June 1999 combined Crude Oil/Condensate production (in Barrels)

STATE	% of Onshore Production	% of Offshore Production
Akwalbom	Nil	35.34
Bayelsa	44.90	20.44
Delta	16.42	20.55
Rivers	29.26	13.57
Total	90.58	89.90

Source: Azaiki, 2006:111

From the above table, it could be seen that the four Niger Delta states above produce over 89% of Nigeria's crude oil, offshore and onshore. Yet the Niger Delta is neglected, underdeveloped, marginalised, suppressed and oppressed. According to Azaiki (2006:111) as admitted by one of the oil companies states that:

...despite the enormous growth potentials of the delta, it is fair to say that from a global standard, the region has not yet attained a satisfactory level of economic development.

The search for petroleum in the Niger Delta has often involved the carrying out of seismic activities and the production of seismic lines. This has often resulted in the destruction of vegetation and wildlife habitat. A more dramatic environmental impact has often resulted from the high incidence of oil spills and uncontrollable flaring of gas.

Oil spillages have also been a source of serious concern in the Niger Delta. oil spills in Nigeria are common occurrence; it has been estimated that between 9 million to 13 million barrels have been spilled since oil drilling started in 1958. UNDP (2006) report states that there have been a total of 6,817 oil spills between 1976 and 2001 which accounts for a loss of three million barrels of oil, of which more than 70% was not recovered. 695 of these spills occurred off-shore, a quarter was in swamps and 65 spilled on land. Human Right Watch, (1999) places the quantity of petroleum jettison yearly at 2,300 cubic meters with an average of 300 individual spills annually.

The causes range from corrosion of oil equipment, failure of equipment, and sabotage. According to Environmental Rights Action (ERA) in one of its studies in 1999 was worried that the spate of oil spillage in the Niger Delta has been unending and this is unleashing untold hardship on the local people. As a result as consistent oil spillages in the Niger Delta means of sustenance were/are grossly impaired, this has contributed to resources scarcity. Food crops like cassava, yams, and cocoyam have been devastated (ERA, 1999). Fish ponds, natural and artificial lakes in the area are also often contaminated by crude oil, leading to the death of fishes. Wildlife is also not spared as animals are dying in droves from drinking polluted streams and lakes. Access to medicinal forest products has been impaired because the ancestral forests with immense medicinal significance have also been destroyed. The spill has also affected the range of traditional occupations available to the people (ERA, 1999). Corroborating this, Olojede et al (2000:30) contend that:

Research has shown that areas that are consistently exposed to large repeated or consistent oil spills or leaks frequently exhibit long term environmental problems. The impact of oil pollution has been extensively discussed. This includes destruction of marine habitat and national vegetation, ecological and physical damage inflicted on the environment with implications for economic sustainabilities of the affected communities. It is such adverse effects that have fuelled anger against the oil companies and the state.

Gas flaring has also been identified as adversely affected the Niger Delta environment. Nigeria flares more natural gas associated with oil extraction than any other country with estimates suggesting that of the 3.5 billion cubic feet (99,000,000 m³) of associated gas produced annually, 2.5 billion cubic feet (71,000,000 m³), or about 70% is wasted via flaring. Statistical data associated with gas flaring is unreliable but, associated gas wasted during flaring is estimated to cost Nigeria US \$2.5 billion on a yearly basis (Friends of the Earth, 2004; World Bank 2008)

Table 3: Flaring of Natural Gas in Major Producing Countries

Country	% Flared
USA	0.6
Holland	0.0
Britain	4.3
USSR	1.5
Mexico	5.0
OPEC Countries	
Nigeria	76.0
Libya	21.0
Saudi Arabia	20.0
Iran	19.0
Algeria	4.0
OPEC Total	18.0
World Total	4.8

Source: Olojede, et al. 2000: 32.

Deductive from the table above, it is indicative that the effect of gas flaring in Nigeria's Niger Delta is much compared to what is obtainable in any other gas producing nations of the world. The table shows that in USA 0.6% gas was flared; and in Mexico 5.0%. Nigeria with 76% has the highest record of gas flaring. Scholars have copiously documented the implications of gas flaring on the environment. Kaladumo (1996) has noted that continuous discharge of gaseous pollutants into the atmosphere poses danger to the population in three ways. Firstly, in an attempt to maintain its integrity, the atmosphere from time to time sheds the load of pollutants through acid rain depositions on the terrestrial/aquatic environment and the population. These have been the source of human health problems and environmental degradation. Secondly, the production of carbon mono and dioxides (Co and Co₂) during combustion, including gas flaring, has been implicated for two related problems:

- a. The green house effect and global warming
- b. Carbon-monoxide – hole creation/hole depletion of the ozone phenomenon in the upper atmosphere. This has resulted in depletion of the ozone layer, which forms a protective cover against ultra violet radiation from the sun.

Both of these constitute global dangers, not only to the indigenous population but the world at large. Azaiki (2007:142) observes that Nigeria has been setting the pace in oil spillage and gas flaring.

Throughout 48 years of oil production, gas has been flared consistently. Much of the 1.39 trillion cubic feet of gas produced annually is flared due to lack of enforcement of regulations, inadequate utilisation, and the low domestic market. The world average of 4% gas flaring is nothing compared to Nigeria's 70% in 2003. With this percentage of associated gas flares, Nigeria leads the world as it takes full credit for 25% of global flare.

He goes further to elucidate that:

In its 2003 annual report, shell reported a 27% increase in its crude oil production. This resulted in an overall increase in its flared gas, total hydrocarbons, and related emissions. World Bank statistics support this claim, showing that each year about 35 million tons of carbon dioxide are (sic) released by gas flaring in the Niger Delta.

All efforts of the federal government to control gas flaring prove abortive as oil companies find the deadlines unachievable.

When the government began to consider the environment and the need to stop flaring was set for 1985The government also formulated a policy of gas re-injection. Oil companies, divided on the issue and unable or unwilling to meet the deadline, decided to lobby for the government to abandon the policy. A second deadline of 2004 soon became unachievable as well, as all 150 flare sites were still in operation in 2003. After much argument between oil companies and the Federal Ministry of Environment, 2008 has been accepted as the target flare out date... all machinery has been put in motion to achieve a production capacity of 4 million barrels of oil per day by 2010. Increased oil production means there will be an increased volume of associated gas to be disposed (Azaiki, 2007: 144)

The negative effects of gas flaring in the Niger Delta have also been extensively discussed by ERA (1999c) and corroborated by Olojede et al, (2000). For example, in Kala Sunji (Rivers state) where gas flaring was said to have been unabated, many people in the community have lost their buildings, roofs, and other properties. Flood and erosion are

also said to have resulted from gas flaring as the area was re-dredged to provide access slot to the station. Infernos have been reported to be common occurrences in Niger Delta as a result of gas flaring in the region. In July 1995, at Oleh-Omoloro, an inferno was said to have occurred as a result of

faulty gas pipe. The fire engulfed adjoining bushes and burnt down valuable economic trees including palm, raffia palm, plantain, and rubber plantations.

The World Bank has also documented various aspect of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta.

Table 4: Ranking of Environmental Issues in the Niger Delta by the World Bank

Category	High Priority	Moderate priority	Lower Priority
Land resources degradation	Agricultural land degradation flooding (Moderate – High)	Coastal Erosion riverbank Erosion	Sea Level Rise
Renewable Resources Degradation	Fisheries Depletion deforestation Biodiversity loss water Hyacinth Expansion	Fisheries Habitat Degradation	Mangrove Degradation Nypa Palm Expansion
Environmental Pollution	Sewage, Vehicular Emissions, Municipal Solid Wastes, Toxic and Harzadous Substances	Oil Pollution, Industrial Effluents, Industrial Air Emissions, Industrial solid Wastes	Gas flaring

Source: Olojede, et al. 2000:33

As shown in the table 2.3 above, land resources degradation is considered to be high, requiring high level intervention. Renewable resource degradation (fisheries depletion, deforestation etc.) is also considered to be very high. Oil pollution is considered to be of moderate priority. However, it is likely that the long term effects of oil pollution which are at present considered to be moderate priority by the World Bank may snowball into a huge environmental crisis demanding urgent actions if not resolved now by government and oil industry (Olojede, et al. (2000).

While the local environment impact of gas flaring in the Niger Delta is assessed as low, its contribution to the international problem of greenhouse gas emission is substantial.

In general, the effects of oil related activities in the Niger Delta are widespread and substantial. Infrastructural development for oil is said to cause serious physical alteration of the environment and denigration of natural resources. While the effects of oil pollution on the environment can be quantified in material terms, its effects on human life cannot. Olojede et al (2000:33) contend:

And, as has been admonished, every influence which however remotely diminishes the richness and variety of our environment ultimately diminishes the fullness and perhaps even the span of life Given that crude oil and petroleum products usually give off inflammable vapour which can be hazardous, this phenomenon calls for greater concern. The gory sight of the Jesse fire disaster in 1998 where many people lost their lives due to an explosion at one of the pipelines makes this phenomenon a matter deserving urgent attention.

In his contribution to this, Dixon (1996:359) avers:

While these environmental scarcities do not cause wars between countries, they do sometimes aggravate stress within countries, helping stimulate clashes, urban unrest, and insurgencies.

Those problems have the capacity of exploding with great implication for the peace and corporate existence of the country. The state and oil companies must wear a human face to closely identify with its host communities and act as agents of positive change among the people (Nigeria's Oil and Gas, 1999).

Oil exploration and production in Nigeria has been a mixed bag of fortune and misfortune, of blessing and curses for the country(Ekpo, 2004). It is the source of her wealth, accounting for about 90% of her foreign exchange earnings. It is the source from which governments at the federal, state and local levels substantially fund their developmental programmes. For oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta, however, oil has been more of a curse than a blessing. In communities where oil exploration and production are carried out onshore, deforestation, erosion and destroyed farmlands are the main signposts for this gift of nature. Oil production activities in these communities have polluted creeks and destroyed aquatic life. And when there are spillages, losses could be unquantifiable, even where attempt are made by the companies to pay monetary compensations. There is also the problem of acid rain, which destroys houses, which people living within the vicinity of oil exploration and production activities have to content with everyday of their lives.

As expounded by Expo (2004) when relaying the joy of the people of the Oguagba in Edo State whose joy knew no bounds when oil production started in the area in 1968 were later to lament thus:

Our joys have become sorrows because the oil production activities have completely destroyed the ecological systems of our clan.

Aquatic life is almost completely destroyed, the soil completely eroded and flora and fauna badly affected almost to the level of extinction. In addition, oil exploration and production activities have subjected us to devastating erosion and permanent pollution, forcing us against our will to lie permanently in a toxic atmosphere (Ekpo, 2004:40)

The existence of oil in the Niger Delta has remained a curse because attempts by oil producing companies to provide palliatives for the harmful effects of their activities have not solved fundamental problems of the people. This explains the restiveness of the people of the area, with manifestations in form of vandalisation, disruption of the operations of oil companies; kidnappings and hostage taking, and the seeming endless demands for monetary compensations. In their determination to find a lasting solution to the environmental problems associated with oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta, NNPC/Shell/Elf/Agip joint venture commissioned the Niger Delta Environmental Survey in 1996 to

Establish the causes of ecological and sociological changes over time and induce corrective actions by encouraging relevant stakeholders to address specific environmental and related socio-economic problems identified in the course of the survey to improve the quality of life of the people and achieve sustainable development of the region” (Ekpo, 2004:42).

The first phase one of the survey, supported by oil firms operating in Nigeria, under the umbrella of the Oil Producers Trade Section (OPTS) of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and industry, Delta State government, Dunlop Nigeria PLC, Nigerian Breweries PLC, a company with a human face, identifies petroleum – related issues including flood, erosion, land degradation, agricultural yield decline, biodiversity depletion, oil spillage and gas flaring to be the major problems of the Niger Delta as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Ranking of Major Environmental Problems, Social Issues and Priorities

Problem type	Problem subset	Priority ranking
Natural Environmental	Coastal	Moderate
	River bank/ Erosion	High
	Flooding	Moderate
	Sedimentation/Siltation	Low
	Subsidence	Low
	Exotics (water hyacinth)	High
Development-related	Land degradation/soil fertility loss	High
	Agricultural decline/shortened fallow	High

	Delta forest loss (mangroves, etc)	High
	Biodiversity depletion	High
	Fisheries decline	High
	Oil spillage	Moderate
	Gas flaring	Moderate
	Sewage and Waste water	High
	Other chemicals	Moderate
Socio-economic problems	Poverty	High
	Unemployment	High
	Community-oil company Conflict	High
	Inter-Community conflict	High
	Intra-community Conflict	High
	Conflict over land	High
	Inadequate compensation	High
	Displacement	High
	Decay in societal values	High
	Poor transportation/ high cost of fuel	High
	Ho using pressure and infrastructure decay	High
	Crime	High

Source: Ekpo, U. (2004); The Niger Delta and Oil Politics, pp43-44.

In corroboration of the above table 4.17, in his own summation, Azaiki (2007:83-85) identifies fourteen (14) major environmental and developmental problems in the Niger Delta:

- i. Flooding and Coastal Erosion: related to deforestation, poor engineering, construction, excavations and inappropriate land use along river banks.
- ii. Sedimentation and Siltation: leading to the narrowing of creeks, reduction in creek depth, increase in intertidal zones, farming and dam construction.
- iii. Degradation and Depletion of Water and Coastal Resources: caused by industrial effluents, oil pollution, salt intrusion, industrial waste, watershed degradation and invasion of aquatic weeds.
- iv. Land Degradation: related to inappropriate waste management, oil spillage, bush burning, urban and industrial pollution, erosion and inappropriate agricultural practices.
- v. Air Pollution: related to gas flaring and acid rain, as well as gaseous emissions from a variety of sources.
- vi. Land Subsistence: related to geographical changes, oil exploration and other mining activities, especially sand mining.
- vii. Bio-Diversity Depletion: related to air pollution, deforestation, population pressure, urbanization and over-exploitation.
- viii. Noise Pollution and Light Problems: related to gas flaring and seismic operations.

- ix. Lack of Community Participation: caused by ignorance, inadequate enlightenment, illiteracy and poor capacity of programme implementation.
- x. Health Problems: related to gaseous emissions and poor management of hazardous wastes.
- xi. Low Agricultural Production: due to over-exploitation of resources, poor farm yields and disincentives for farming operations and unsustainable agricultural practices.
- xii. Socio-Economic Problems: causing joblessness, poverty, loss of farm land, inappropriate compensation measures, poor infrastructure/amenity base and human settlement difficulties, as well as lack of sustained commitment to rural development programmes implementation, co-ordination and resource assessment.
- xiii. Weak or Non-Existent Laws/Regulations: related to weakness, biases in political as well as legal frameworks, which govern economic and environmental policies and actions. Includes regulatory and enforcement failure.
- xiv. Improvement in the well-being of the population: ultimately, the well-being of the population in the Niger Delta will depend on how these problems are addressed.

In respect to our objective two and hypothesis two, the crisis at the Niger Delta has really impacted on the socio-political and economic life of the people of the Niger Delta and the Nigerians at large. This corroborates Ekpo's (2004) tabular representation of the socio-economic problems of the Niger-Delta communities.

Table 6: Showing the Degree of Socio-Economic Impact of the Niger Delta Problems on the People and Environment

Socio-economic problems	Poverty	High
	Unemployment	High
	Community-oil company Conflict	High
	Inter-Community conflict	High
	Intra-community Conflict	High
	Conflict over land	High
	Inadequate compensation	High
	Displacement	High
	Decay in societal values	High
	Poor transportation/ high cost of fuel	High
	Housing pressure and infrastructure decay	High
	Crime	High

Source: Ekpo, (2004); The Niger Delta and Oil Politics, pp43-44.

Thus, deducing from Ekpo (2004), as stated above in the table 4.20 the Niger Delta people are groaning as a result of the socio-political effects of the crisis at the region. With the high rate of all social-economic indices so high ranging from unemployment, community-oil conflict, inter and intra communities' conflicts, conflicts over land inadequate compensation, displacement, decay in societal values, poor transportation/high cost of fuel, housing pressure and infrastructure decay and crime rate, the insecurity in the region cannot be over-emphasized.

Niger Delta region has not fared well in the area of Human Development Index (HDI) going by the submission of the UNDP. In 1996, UNDP computed the first HDI for Nigerian states, for the year 1992.

Table 7: UNDP HDI for Nigerian States, for the Year 1992.

State	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult Literacy (%)	Mean year of schooling	Educational attainment (%)	Real GDP per capita	Adjusted real GDP per capita (PPP\$)	HDI
Bendel	53.7	65.5	4.00	45.07	5,003.4	5,003.4	0.631
Rivers	50.2	51.9	3.84	35.88	4,860.7	4,860.7	0.539
Cross Rivers	57.8	69.4	3.27	47.36	2,626.0	2,626.0	0.513
Lagos	61.4	65.0	3.92	44.64	2,034.7	2,034.7	0.489
Imo	60.0	75.6	3.80	51.67	1,341.1	1,341.1	0.466
Gongola	57.8	26.0	2.15	18.05	665.1	665.1	0.214
Ondo	49.4	50.6	3.29	34.83	422.9	422.9	0.212
Oyo	51.3	40.4	3.11	27.97	678.1	678.1	0.210
Niger	54.9	16.0	1.04	11.01	1,262.0	1,262.0	0.191
Benue	53.5	27.0	1.91	18.64	809.5	809.5	0.188
Kwara	45.9	40.0	3.00	27.67	1,020.1	1,020.1	0.183
Anambra	44.9	43.1	2.91	29.70	860.1	860.1	0.174
Kano	57.1	12.1	0.73	8.31	692.6	692.6	0.161
Plateau	39.5	36.7	2.18	25.19	1,224.1	1,224.1	0.149
Sokoto	49.2	2.7	0.43	1.94	1,246.2	1,246.2	0.128
Bauchi	36.7	39.8	2.03	27.21	762.2	762.2	0.127
Ogun	37.4	41.8	2.81	28.80	619.3	619.3	0.126
Kaduna	36.6	30.8	1.52	21.04	876.4	876.4	0.101
Borno	37.0	10.0	0.55	6.85	957.8	957.8	0.042
HDI of 1993	51.5	50.7	1.20	34.20s	1,215.0	1,215.0	0.246

Source: UNDP 2006:53

Deriving from the table 4.21 above, The Niger Delta states of Bendel(now Delta and Edo states) and Cross Rivers (now Bayelsa and Cross Rivers) obtained the highest HDI scores in Nigeria outperforming even Lagos state. The HDI scores were 0.631 for Bendel, 0.539 for Rivers and 0.513 for Cross Rivers. UNDP (2006) argued on the basis of their HDI

scores, these three states “would easily have qualified in 1990 as Middle Human Development Countries occupying positions 79th, 91st and 96th respectively in the world”.

Comparing the HDI for the Niger Delta states for 2005 above with the available as shown in the table below:

Table 8: UNDP HDI for the Niger Delta States for 2005

States	Life expectancy	Education index	GDP index	HDI
Abia	0.492	0.578	0.560	0.543
Akwabom	0.506	0.683	0.540	0.576
Bayelsa	0.455	0.523	0.520	0.499
Cross River	0.556	0.630	0.565	0.584
Delta	0.587	0.636	0.621	0.615
Edo	0.579	0.602	0.600	0.594
Imo	0.503	0.546	0.591	0.547
Ondo	0.501	0.575	0.512	0.529
Rivers	0.563	0.590	0.620	0.591
Niger Delta	0.527	0.596	0.570	0.564

Source: EMRL field survey, 2005

Deductively from the table above table 4.22, it shows the average HDI for the Niger Delta states as 0.564, the average in 1992 was 0.472, with Bendel (now Delta and Edo states) the highest performing at 0.631. In the table above, the highest performing state Delta has an HDI of 0.615, which represents a slight drop. In the 2002 global HDI ranking of countries, Delta would have ranked in the 125th position with Morocco, a big drop from the position of 90th in 1996. Clearly, the relative human development situation in the Niger Delta has declined. It is also important to note that most states made appreciable progress between 1992 and 2005. Most states from the Niger Delta region, especially the South-South geopolitical zone, performed poorly. Edo, Delta and Bayelsa showed some retrogressive trends while Ondo, Abia, AkwaIbom, Cross River and Rivers and Imo states achieved some progress. Based on this, UNDP (2006:56) concluded that though:

The Niger Delta states will appear relatively high on the HDI indicators of life expectant, knowledge and GDP per capita. These, unfortunately, do not include the items that the Niger Delta states badly need, such as roads, water, electricity, appropriate waste management and so on. It will therefore be necessary to look beyond the HDI for an effective assessment of the Niger Delta.

Commenting on this Azaiki (2007:173-175) venting his opinion contends that:

With regards to available infrastructure, Nigeria (emphasis on the Niger Delta) has

been variously described as having one of the worst physical development indicators in the world. The country is also at the bottom in human development factors, ranking 158 in the world in the 2005 Human development Index. Infrastructure is steadily from neglect as its social services deteriorate from lack of funds and priority. Roads, bridges, and school buildings collapse one after the other, hospitals (especially in the rural areas) grind to a halt unnoticed by the leaders...the transportation sector is still in a state of despair... The rail system is almost extinct... Housing, healthcare, clean water, electricity, communication, recreational facilities and even food are luxury affordable only for the rich and in many cases, the very rich, since the middle class has been extinct. In a country whose petroleum resources are monopolised by the ruling class and their associates, the rest society is condemned to poverty and voicelessness.

In addition, he submits that:

The inadequacy of educational facilities and high drop-out and unemployment rates coupled with many young people’s desire to take part in the affluence lifestyle of the treasury culminates in crime explosion. Crime becomes more sophisticated every

day. Secret cults and ritual killings are a dreadful aspect of national life. It is reported that up to 85 secret cults groups exists in Nigeria.

He goes further,

The socio-economic factors of employment, poverty, and inadequacy of educational facilities all contribute to the crime rate in Nigeria. Until these are address and resolved, there will only be a sleeper rise in crime. One way the government could bring about equality is to take care of the Niger Delta region, the most impoverished people in the country.

III. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It is an undeniable fact from the above that oil exploration has reduces the people of the Niger Delta to a status of sub-human in their own land. This is as a result of the socio-political and economic impact of the expedition on them. Therefore for the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs) especially in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region, the following suggestions are necessary.

- i. An urgent and wholesome clean up of the entire Niger Delta area where oil spillage has affected should be done without further delay.
- ii. Oil producing companies should be made to be more responsible to their community social responsibilities to their host communities.
- iii. They should as a matter of urgency to curtail the present rate of oil spill and gas flare.
- iv. An integrated, bottom-top participatory process that ensures the livelihood of the people and their psychological needs should be adopted. An integrated, bottom-top participatory process that ensures the sense of belonging in decision making should be employed.
- v. There also has to be rapid development of the Niger Delta region to address unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, and infrastructural decay. In other words a state of emergency should be declared on infrastructural development of the region.
- vi. Restructuring of the Nigerian federal system is very imperative at this period in such a way that more powers and responsibilities be devolved to the state and the local governments which will directly impacted the people of the oil bearing communities. The local government as the closest government to the people at the grass-root should be made autonomous with greater fiscal power to carry out the statutory responsibilities. A situation whereby the local government is made an appendage of the state government by the 1999 constitution should be reviewed.

- vii. The intervening measures, such as Amnesty programme, establishment of NDDC, The Niger Delta Ministry etc should be better strengthened and funded to meet the purpose of their creation. All funds that are owed these agencies should be released forthwith and as when due.
- viii. It is important to note at this junction that eclectic or holistic approach to the problem of the Niger Delta is needed rather than just a policy. Also Nigeria should learn from other nations of the world with the same problem and have been able to overcome their challenges.

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