

The Niger Delta of Nigeria: The Curse of Oil.

لعنة النفط في دلتا النيجر بنيجيريا

TALEB Wafaa^{1*}

University Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed (Algeria). Wafaa_tb@yahoo

Received: 26/09/2020

Accepted: 29/03/2021

Published: 15 /05/2021

Abstract:

Nigeria, thanks to its rich region of the Niger Delta, is currently the 13th largest oil producer in the world; it is the largest oil producer in Africa and the world's fourth largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Considering Nigeria's substantial resources, it should be Africa's crown jewel, but it is not. On the contrary, the country is experiencing conflicts, also called "oil conflicts", between the different ethnic groups that inhabit the oil rich Niger Delta region and the government of Nigeria. The aim of this article is to understand the reasons for these conflicts that can be summarized as follows: the political legacy of the British colonizer, the government policy of allocation and control of resources, poverty and the lack of sustainable development in the region, unemployment and the lack of compensation for the damages caused by the oil industry.

Keywords: Conflicts, ethnicity, oil, Nigeria, Niger Delta.

ملخص:

نيجيريا، بفضل منطقتها الغنية في دلتا النيجر، هي حاليًا ثالث أكبر منتج للنفط في العالم، وهي أكبر منتج للنفط في إفريقيا ورابع أكبر مصدر في العالم للغاز الطبيعي المسال. بالنظر إلى موارد نيجيريا الكبيرة، كان من المفترض أن تكون جوهرة تاج إفريقيا، لكنها ليست كذلك. على العكس من ذلك، تشهد البلاد صراعات، تسمى أيضًا "صراعات النفط"، بين المجموعات العرقية المختلفة التي تعيش في منطقة دلتا النيجر الغنية بالنفط وحكومة نيجيريا. الهدف من هذا المقال هو فهم أسباب هذه الصراعات التي يمكن تلخيصها على النحو التالي: الإرث السياسي للمستعمر البريطاني، سياسة الحكومة في تخصيص الموارد والسيطرة عليها، الفقر وعدم التنمية المستدامة في المنطقة، البطالة، وعدم التعويض عن اضرار صناعة النفط

كلمات مفتاحية:

الصراعات، العرق، النفط، نيجيريا، دلتا النيجر

¹TALEB Wafaa.

I- Introduction:

Conflict over natural resources has made Africa the focus of international attention, particularly during the last decade. From oil in Nigeria and diamonds in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to land in Zimbabwe and water in the Horn of Africa.

Many African countries are blessed with oil and mineral wealth that has the potential to transform their economies. Ideally the development of these resources can be a blessing for the entire continent. But historically, those resources have often proved to be a curse than a blessing especially to the majority of the citizens in these African countries.

It is generally found that pervasive conflicts characterise resource-dependent communities (Glenn S. Johnson, 2009, p155). An enduring dilemma in a locality where development is dependent on resource attraction is that powerless indigenous communities tend to suffer most of the social, economic, and environmental costs while enjoying little or no benefits (M.B. Lane, and R.E. Rickson, 1997, pp121- 142).

The Niger Delta in Nigeria has historically been the site of major conflicts between the native population, multinational corporations, and the Nigerian government military and police forces, often resulting in gross violations of human rights including bloody killings and massive destruction of human habitats and the environment.

The importance of oil lies in the fact that crude oil and natural gas are the most important sources of energy in the world. Today, Nigeria is one of the world's top ten producers of oil and has significant reserves, estimated at approximately 32 billion barrels (The Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria SPDC). Nigeria Bonny Light and Forcados' sweet crude are very popular among oil companies and buyers alike due to their low sulphur content, which makes them easier to refine with minimum waste to the atmosphere (Oronto Douglas and Ike Okonta, 2001, p54.).



Nigerian crude is ‘therefore highly sought after by refineries in Europe and in the United States, where there are very strict rules guiding environmental pollution’ atmosphere (Oronto Douglas and Ike Okonta, 2001, p54.). The quality of Nigerian crude combined with the country’s geographical location, which situates it closer to the markets of Western Europe and the United States than its Middle Eastern counterparts (Sarah Ahmad Khan, 1994, p01), makes Nigerian oil highly attractive.

Effectively, Nigerian geographical situation and the availability and quality of its oil resources have attracted different Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs) since the colonial era. Moreover, ever since becoming an oil dependent economy in the 1970’s, the politics of who should control the oil wealth and who should get what share of it have taken centre stage in Nigeria, aggravating the incidence of national instability.

Oil resources development means economic growth; however, this assertion is not the case in the Niger Delta where the State and MNOCs have continued to play the role of arbitrator

in the development of oil resources in the region. This action alienates and excludes other actors from participating and availing from the oil revenues. As a result, there were violent resistance, kidnapping, hostage-taking and destruction of life and property in the region where oil is derived.

In fact, economic deprivation, unemployment, alienation, exclusion of the local elites and lack of sustainable development in the Niger Delta area are the drivers of violent conflicts that have beleaguered the region for more than four decades.

Conflicts in the Niger Delta typifies exactly into Peter Coleman's² notion that conflicts have an extensive past, a turbulent present and a murky future (C.E. Omoti, Sep 2006, pp256-260.). The import of this assertion is that the Niger Delta people had suffered extensive exploitation of their resources and had not benefited from it. They have experienced a long history of neglect, deprivation, unemployment, loss of livelihood and environmental destruction of their lands with no compensation for the loss. The local communities of the oil-rich Niger Delta, on the contrary, are oppressed, humiliated and politically marginalised.

Research Question:

This research paper attempts to answer the following question:
What are the reasons that led to the oil conflicts between the different ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region and the government of Nigeria?

Hypotheses:

This research paper revolves around the assumption that the main reasons for the oil conflicts in the Niger Delta are:

1. The political legacy of the British Coloniser.
2. The government policy towards oil resource allocation and control.
3. Poverty and the lack of sustainable development in the Niger Delta region.
4. The problem of unemployment in the Niger Delta region.
5. The lack of Compensation for the damages caused by the oil industry.

Methodology:

The research paper adopts an institutional perspective to examine the main reasons to the oil conflicts in the Niger Delta.

Structure of the research paper:

In order to answer the previous question, the study will be divided into five sections, each one of them corresponding to one of the causes that led to the oil conflicts.

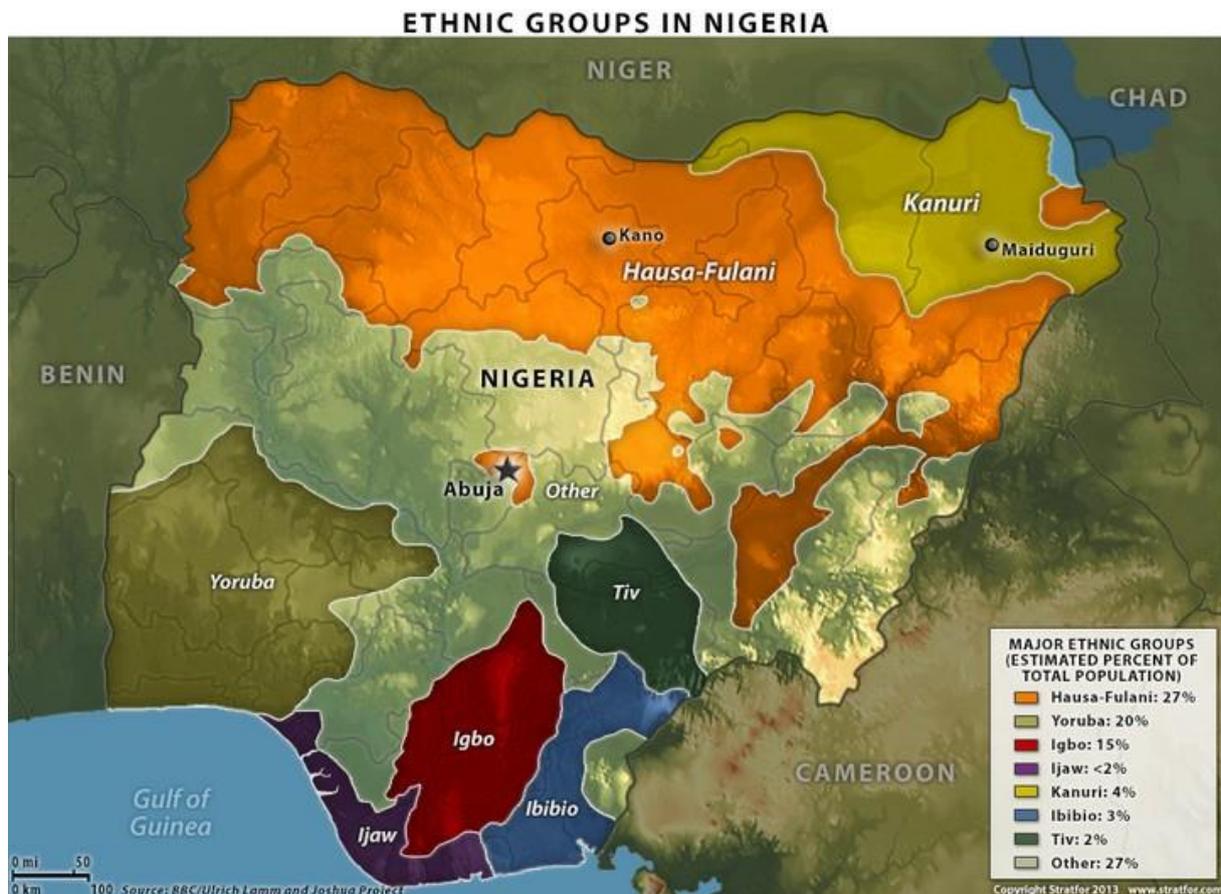
² William Peter Coleman (born 15 December 1928) is an Australian writer and former politician. A widely published journalist for over 60 years, he was editor of *The Bulletin* (1964–1967) and of *Quadrant* for 20 years, and has published 16 books on political, biographical and cultural subjects.

II-The Key Causes of Oil Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region:

II.1. Colonial Legacy:

The conflicts in the Niger Delta date back to colonial times. Not only is there a link between the conflicts in the colonial era and contemporary conflicts in the region (R.T.Ako, P. Okonmah & T.Ogunleye, 2009, p55), but also the later conflicts are, as a result of the colonially entrenched inequity that characterised the earlier ones. The division of the country into three regions in 1939 by the British Colonial government amplified the issue of ethnicity that has proved to be very divisive as manifested in the on-going struggle for resource control. In other words, ethnicity, which outstrips politics and socio-economic competition for resources in Nigeria, is a consequence of the political division of the country into three regions. As observed by Nnoli in his study about ethnic politics in Nigeria:

Ethnicity is one of the major concerns in Nigerian politics. The three major ethnic groups in the country (Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa/Fulani) are politically united when it comes to decisions regarding the exploitation of the Niger Delta oil resources. (Okwudiba Enugu Nnoli, 1980).



Thus, the peoples of the Niger Delta first manifested their fear of marginalisation by the major ethnic groups in 1958 under the colonial government and, therefore, opted to separate from the rest of Nigeria. This request led to the formation of the Willink Commission³, whose report in 1958 held that the Niger Delta region should be treated as a special area for development.

The Niger Delta grievances and conflicts are deeply entrenched in colonialism. The people believe that the British colonial government enacted obnoxious laws that bestowed ownership and control of their oil to the Crown. For instance, the Mining Regulation (Oil) Ordinance of 1907 that provided that:

[i]t shall be lawful for the Governor to enter into an agreement with any Native Authority for the purchase of full and exclusive rights in and overall mineral oils within and under any lands which are the property of any Native Community. (R.T. Ako, 2013, p 08).

This implies that the ownership of the land beneath which the oil resources lay was vested on these communities before the Ordinance. Yet, the colonial government also promulgated the Mineral Oil Ordinance in 1914, with amendments in 1916, 1945, 1950 and 1959 and that simply reaffirmed state ownership and control of the oil resources by the central government.

The Eastern Nigerian elites were uncomfortable with these laws; they felt that they had deprived the inhabitants of the oil-rich region the right to their natural property. Thus, the struggle over the ownership of oil was a cynical cause of the Biafra war that took place between 1967 and 1970 (R.T. Ako, 2013, p 09). The easterners attempted to secede from Nigeria because the Niger Delta was politically under the Eastern Region. While the war was on-going the then federal military government re-asserted the state ownership of the oil resources, which still stands till today (R.T. Ako, 2013, p 08).

Obviously, when an existing culture is transformed via colonialism, there would normally be a negative impact on the newly transformed communities as is the case in the Niger Delta region. The colonial transformation in Nigeria has only led to ethnic schism and sowed the seed of conflict. Cyril Obi, the program director of the African Peace building Network program insists that the current government policies and constitutions are benchmarked on the legacies of colonialism (C.I. Obi, 2010, pp 219-236).

After independence, the Nigerian state's consciousness on the real nature of oil as a source of massive wealth alongside the fact that oil is only concentrated in the areas of the southern minority of the Niger Delta prompted the Nigerian leaders from the majority ethnic groups into the promulgation of some questionable legislation. These regulations were unambiguously used for the exploitation and disempowerment of the Niger Delta minorities. Thus, the Nigerian government modified the colonial Mineral Ordinances. Such post-colonial regulations include:

- Decree No. 51 of 1969, through which the ownership of the totality of petroleum products in the delta region to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

³ The Willink Commission named after Harry Willink, former Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University and head of a panel commissioned in September, 1957 to look into fears expressed by minority ethnic groups that the colonial imposed political structure would lead to the domination of the minority groups by the majority ethnic groups in the three regions of the federation.

- The Land Use Decree of 1978, which also vested land ownership in Nigeria in the Federal Government and its accredited agents; thereby dispossessing the Niger Delta people to property and occupancy rights to their lands.

- The Offshore Oil Revenue Act of 1971, which vested in the Federal Government of Nigeria the exclusive rights over the continental shelf of the coastal areas.

These regulations usually become effective or operational whenever the companies and the government want to take advantage of the host communities as far as the natural resources in the region are concerned (V. Ojatorotu & D. Gilbert, 2010, p 10). The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria; the Hausa Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo, have been in firm control of these resources since political independence in 1960. Regrettably, these intolerable decrees are yet to be modified or even abolished despite the vociferous violent criticisms against their continued use by the Niger Delta environmental activists.

II.2. Resource Allocation and Resource Control:

The revenue allocation formula that was adopted by the Nigerian government has been particularly criticised and roundly rejected for not reflecting the interests of the people in the Niger Delta region where over 80 per cent of the national resource is produced. The Federal Government attributes the restiveness in the Niger Delta region to the politics surrounding resource control.

The Niger Delta upheaval has grown from bad to worse, assuming a debilitating pattern traceable to the formation of social groups that sought to challenge the state and its policies (V. Ojatorotu, 2009, p 02). The Niger Delta conflict is triggered by oil revenue allocation and oil-related decrees that the Niger Delta communities believe must be abrogated as they do not represent their interests as host communities. The struggle for natural resources as a means of survival remains the driving force of agitation amongst groups in various communities. This is what is described as ‘the oil citizenship phenomenon’ (Omolade Adunbi, 2016, pp 547-548).

The Niger Delta conflict means different things to various ethnic nationalities in the area that view resource control as essential to their sustainable livelihoods and needs to be given much attention by policymakers if they mean well for the people and Nigerian at large (V. Ojatorotu, 2009, p 6). The preceding is reaffirmed by Obi in his argument that the revenue sharing formula which is in force in Nigeria is the principal cause of most of the conflicts in the area, and how well the government can resolve it would largely determine the peace and development of the region (Cyril I. Obi, 2001, p 87).

The perception of the people within the host communities of the Niger Delta region is more negative than positive, as they feel the oil has brought more of a curse to them than a blessing, owing to associated violence, insecurity, environmental crisis, and the loss of cultural values. These grievances of the Niger Delta people over the revenue allocation mechanism in the country allegedly prompted the famous environmental activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa⁴, to embark on a peaceful struggle for the emancipation of the Ogoni people from state-imposed poverty (A.I.Moro, 2009, p 324).

⁴ Ken" Saro-Wiwa (10 October 1941 – 10 November 1995) was a Nigerian writer, television producer, environmental activist, was a member of the Ogoni people, an ethnic minority in Nigeria.

By 1990, the Ogoni evaluated their situation and came to a conclusion that, despite the enormous oil and gas wealth in their land that feeds the entire nation, they still, unfortunately, live in poverty and squalor (H.T. Ejibunu, 2007, p 07).

Moreover, unemployment and underemployment were running high; and worse still, their environment has been adversely affected by reckless oil exploitation, and ecological warfare sponsored by the transnational oil industries operating in the area. The Ogoni believe that their existence as a people was endangered by environmental degradation, political marginalisation, economic strangulation and ‘slavery, which the people of the region were being subjected to every day’ (H.T. Ejibunu, 2007, p 07).

It was their unprecedented response to the dangers to human existence that generated the emergence of environmental rights activists and civil society groups in the region. Each group was characterised by ethnic nationalism to free its people in the Niger Delta region.

Ethnic nationalism in the Niger Delta has become one of the major problems in the region. Effectively, many people, under the guise of fighting for the economic emancipation of the people, exploit the oil companies and the Federal Government by demanding money that never gets to the hands of the abused citizens in the Niger Delta region.

II.3. Poverty and Lack of sustainable Development:

Poverty and the lack of sustainable development are other major causes of the conflict. The Niger Delta region is seen as the powerhouse of the Nigerian economy, generating billions of dollars for the government since oil was discovered in 1956. It has been observed by scholars that:

Despite this enormous income, the oil-bearing people in the Niger Delta live in abject poverty and deprivation, to the extent that these people do not have access to basic social amenities, like good water and electricity. (P.O. Oviasuyi & Uwadiae, 2010, p115).

Similarly, it has also been observed that the region tends to be a place:

Where time seems to have stood still and where people live in poverty, leaving the residents of the region without any other option than to be bitter and angry over the neglect of the people by the federal government... In the Niger Delta, a scene of abject poverty pervades the area, which is very similar to what one is likely to find in a refugee camp notwithstanding the fact that the region fetches the government the money for running the affairs of the state. (H.T. Ejibunu, p 10)

Moreover, it is now internationally recognised that states have a right to development (Yinka Omorogbe, 2003, p 144), and a new branch of international law, known as international development law, has emerged. The 1986 United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the right to development (General Assembly Resolution 41/128, 1986) states that the right to development is an inalienable human right applicable to ‘every human person and all people’. It further states that ‘the human person is the central subject of development and should be the

active participant and beneficiary of development' (General Assembly Resolution 41/128, Article 1, 1986).

It also categorically gives states the right and the duty to formulate appropriate national development policies that aim at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in the development and in the fair distribution of the benefits there from (General Assembly Resolution 41/128, Article 2, 1986). Also, 'states have the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favourable to the realisation of the right to development'.

Moreover, in Africa, the right of peoples to development is an international law. For states, such as Nigeria, that have enacted the African Charter on Human and People's rights as part of their national legislation, it is also part of municipal law (Yinka Omorogbe, p 145). Therefore, there is a right to development for peoples; a right which surely applies to the oil producing communities and to any other communities in Nigeria.

II.4. Oil resources and Unemployment:

There is a linkage between oil resources activities and the loss of livelihoods in the Niger Delta region leading to a new socio-economic condition, which is unemployment. The unemployment situation in oil village communities which are mainly rural is linked to the loss of their traditional sources of livelihoods, which are farming land and fishing waters due to the devastating environmental effects of oil operations on the region. A director of one of the interventionist agencies set up by Nigeria's federal government to handle issues of underdevelopment caused by oil resources in the Niger Delta pointed out:

It is one of the major causes of the conflicts that we are having today. There is massive unemployment, or say in Delta state, there is no one organisation or establishment in Delta state that employs up to 500 workers, none! So unemployment is high in Delta state and is criminal. And if you look at the population growth, and the unemployment situation, the whole thing becomes a vicious circle that strengthens violent conflicts. With no farming land and fishing activities due to either oil company take-over of the land or because of oil spillage, the people especially the youths are restless and violent at any slightest provocation (Ndubuisi Ndubechukwu Nwokolo, p155).

Indeed, the lifestyle of the people and their traditional means of livelihood have been grossly affected, and their right to means of livelihood violated. These radical changes in the nature of livelihoods are mainly due to various oil activities which among other things have continually denied people access to their ancestral land which has been the main source of livelihoods and means of production.

In other words, as more oil deposits are discovered, there are displacements of more people from their farming lands and fishing waters. As a result of the displacement, people from such affected communities, especially the farmers and fishermen, lose their sources of livelihoods, and 'in many cases want to start fishing in their neighbours' waters, which often result to inter-communal ownership conflicts ((Ndubuisi Ndubechukwu Nwokolo, p156).

Consequently, the Niger-Delta region is seriously confronted by problems of unemployment, and with the loss of a greater part of its source of livelihoods to oil resources activities, there are fierce struggles to gain employment in the only booming sector in the communities, which is the oil companies.

Although high unemployment is not entirely peculiar to the oil village communities alone, they fall into the sector that has the highest level of unemployment in Nigeria, which is 25.6%, as against national unemployment rate which is 23.9% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This level of unemployment could be seen as part of the reasons for chronic poverty in rural areas, which has 66.1% of absolute poverty and 73.2% of relative poverty (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Moreover, even with the boom and growth in oil industry, the dwellers of these communities are hardly given employment, and even where such opportunities are allocated to the communities, they are personalised. Furthermore, according to the 2020 National Bureau of Statistics report, the South-South geopolitical zone, which corresponds to the Niger Delta region, is the most affected region with 37.0% unemployment rate, followed by the South East with 29.1%, the North Central with 27.9%, the Northeast with 27.9%, North West with 26.3%, and the South West with 18.0%. ((National Bureau of Statistics,2020).

Thereby, oil resources cement economic inequality among the youths of the oil-bearing communities (OBCs) leading to fierce struggle and affect social relations in these communities. Amnesty International noted that the oil companies in order 'to alleviate the frustrations of communities without development or employment,...offer "ghost" jobs, paying money to people who are not expected to work' (Amnesty International, 2005). And in cases where there are such jobs, only a few places are available, and in most instances, there are lots of other factors which come to play to determine who gets such position. Factors such as politics, privileges and patrimonialism in the community influence who gets such job opportunity. In most cases, such situation degenerates into violence within such communities as people struggle for such few well-paid oil jobs.

Accordingly, oil resources to a large extent change the existing dominant nature of employment and livelihoods of the OBCs, particularly when farming land or fishing waters are acquired for oil activities. However, it does not reproduce corresponding employment positions to take care of those displaced from their original jobs or source of livelihoods. This creates a form of structural inequality within the host communities.

Supporting this evidence, it is estimated that '62 per cent of the inhabitants are below thirty years of age, unemployment is high, and there are few opportunities for advancement' (F, D. Lapinand, P. Rossiasco, 2011, p 04). This, to a great extent, has fuelled violent conflicts in most oil communities in many ways, especially in a situation where the few opportunities which come as casual jobs are to be contested for by numerous unemployed 'youths'. As a consequence, such communities are thrown into violent struggles over land and job opportunities.

II.5. Lack of Compensation for Oil Industry's Damages:

Compensation is an important measure of equity and fairness. Compensation as a general rule is making amends for any loss and injury suffered otherwise known as *restitution*

in integrum.⁵ The essence of compensation is to recompense for breach or damage done to property, lands, building and personal goods.

It is noteworthy to mention that Article 21 (2) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides that 'all peoples' who are disposed of their wealth and natural resources shall have the right to the lawful recovery of its property as well as to an adequate compensation.'⁶ Also, Article 21 (5) maintained that states parties to the present Charter should undertake to eliminate all forms of foreign economic exploitation particularly that practised by international monopolies to enable their people to benefit from the advantages derived from their national resources fully. Nigeria is a signatory to this Charter, but it is questionable if the country complies or respects its dictates.

In the Niger Delta region, there are various violent struggles in the oil communities over compensation. These compensations are mainly payment for land acquired for prospective oil exploration or payment due to environmental damage especially from the oil spills. Accordingly, compensations in cases of acquisition of land are paid either to an individual or family. Furthermore, in situations where a piece of land is communally owned, the community leadership or executive negotiates and receives such compensation on behalf of members of the community. The same arrangement is equally applicable in cases of compensations for oil spill.

Nevertheless, there is high distrust about ways in which compensations are disbursed to the OBCs. In fact, oil companies and oil village communities are often in conflict on whether an oil spill is sabotage or not. In many instances, this has resulted in an unexpected crisis, particularly when the oil company had initially accepted liability, only to turn back after some days to accuse such community of sabotage.

For example, International Crisis Group reported about Azuzuama in Bayelsa state, where a MNOC's oil pipeline has devastated the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the community. On contacting Agip, the oil MNC involved, they claimed ignorance of the spill but later confirmed that corrosion could have caused the spills but that the company was not ruling out the possibility that saboteurs had used acid to hasten up pipeline deterioration to demand compensation (International Crisis Group, 2006).

This is among the frequent causes of conflict in most oil communities. In instances where an oil company either denies culpability or is too slow to act, the affected oil community takes measures such as protests, shutting down the oil operations or taking the oil workers as hostages to press home their demands. Violent confrontation by oil village communities makes the payment of their compensations or claims paramount. Thus, it could mean that peaceful communities may not have their demands taken as important.

Moreover, there is an existence of a 'selective empowerment style'⁷, in which the ringleaders in such affected community or communities are selectively compensated either by

⁵*Restitutio ad integrum* or *restitutio in integrum* is a Latin term which means restoration to original condition. It is one of the primary guiding principles behind the awarding of damages in common law negligence claims. The general rule, as the principle implies, is that the amount of compensation awarded should put the successful plaintiff in the position he or she would have been had the tortious action not been committed. Thus the plaintiff should clearly be awarded damages for direct expenses such as medical bills and property repairs and the loss of future earnings attributable to the injury (which often involves difficult speculation about the future career and promotion prospects). In: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/restitutio-in-integrum.html>

⁶See Article 21, (2) and (5) of African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

⁷The term 'selective empowerment style' is an act of making some selected members of an oil-bearing community, especially those the oil companies consider as arrow-heads of conflicts or the elites or leaders' benefits from *petro business* either in form of contracts, employments or financial payments.

awarding of contract, employment or financial rewards to reduce their involvement in the struggle against the oil company.

Another aspect arises from within the oil communities where their representatives, village development executives or community leaders who represent an entire community during negotiations for compensation, on receiving the agreed financial compensation, mismanage it. In many instances, the most affected peoples whose farmland or fishing nets were affected or destroyed by such oil spill get little or no compensation at all.

In fact, grievances over the nature and manner of distribution of compensation received from oil MNOCs presents most conditions for violent struggles and circumstances for a full-blown intra-communal violent conflict. This, therefore, could arise from situations where money paid by an oil company ends up in pockets of few members of the community.

Again, oil resources have created a 'rentier psychology'⁸ among the oil village communities, and further foster the institutionalisation of a patrimonial culture in community leadership driven by oil rent and benefits. In the view of K. Omeje, Professor of International Relations at the United States International University (USIU) in Nairobi, Kenya 'The distribution of rentier revenues in this context, in the absence of stable and well-developed legal, political and bureaucratic institutions, tends to encourage corruption' (K. Omeje, 2006, p 03). This means that since oil resources have re-structured the existing economy in these communities, there is the tendency that the new social relations introduced include 'rent-seeking culture'.⁹

With oil resources negatively impacting on their sources of livelihood, seeking compensation for their land has virtually made them 'rentier communities'.¹⁰ OBCs request any form of compensation, be it compensation for prospective oil exploration or oil spill on farmland or the fishing waters. When their expectations are not met, they could resort to violent conflict.

III- Conclusion:

The different minority ethnic groups living in the oil-rich Niger Delta are neglected and marginalised. Moreover, they suffer untold hardship caused by commercial oil exploration and exploitation ever since oil was discovered in the area. Through several Nigerian laws and state policies, the Niger Delta inhabitants are denied both economic and social rights thereby making their civil and political rights almost meaningless. The on-going abuse and violation of rights with impunity in the region has made their promotion and protection through the rule of law impossible and the conflicts in the region still going on. There could be more grave and generational consequences to the people in the area and if the trend is left unchecked.

⁸'Rentier Psychology' is developed out of the activities of a rentier state, which involves the conditioning of the mind and behaviour of people linked to the oil resource (in this instance, the oil village communities) to the belief of demanding and making financial and material gains from oil resources or its agents-*petro business*. This also includes job opportunities in the oil industry or payment of salaries without working.

⁹This implies a new way of life that is built on seeking oil related rents, revenues, benefits and opportunities such as compensation, financial hand-outs, especially with the loss of means of livelihoods to oil resources.

¹⁰This is used to represent the status of oil communities as dependent on oil related rents. Like *rentier States*, "rentier communities" show the same trends in a micro level, as all economic activities of the communities such as earnings revolves around the oil industry.

• **References:**

- **AHMED KHAN, S. (1994).** *Nigeria: The Political Economy of Oil.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- **AKO, R. (2013).** *Environmental Justice in Developing Countries: Perspectives from Africa.* London: Routledge.
- **AKO, R.T., OKONMAH, P. & OGUNLEYE, T. (2009).** “The Niger Delta crisis: A social justice approach to the analysis of two conflict eras”, *Journal of African Development*, 11 (2).
- **Amnesty International, (2005).** ‘Nigeria-Ten Years on: Injustice and Violence haunt the oil Delta’. From: [Http://www.amensty.org/library/index/ENGAFR440222005](http://www.amensty.org/library/index/ENGAFR440222005) (Consulted on 13/03/2007).
- **BABATUNDE, A.O. (2020).** “Oil pollution and water conflicts in the riverine communities in Nigeria’s Niger Delta region: challenges for and elements of problem-solving strategies”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 38:2, 274-293.
- **Declaration on the Right to Development, (1986),** adopted by General Assembly resolution 41/128. From: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/righttodevelopment.aspx> (Consulted on 27/08/ 2020).
- **DOUGLAS, O., OKONTA, I. (2003).** *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights and Oil in the Niger Delta,* Verso.
- **Ejibunu, H.T. (2007).** *Nigeria’s Niger Delta Crisis: Root Cause of Peacefulness,* Stadtschlaining: European University Centre for Peace Studies.
- **JOHNSON, G. S. (2009).** *Environmental Justice in the New Millennium Global Perspectives on Race, Ethnicity, and Human Rights.* US: Palgrave Macmillan.
- **International Crisis Group. (2006).** ‘Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis’, Africa Report N°118. From: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/118-fuelling-the-niger-delta-crisis.pdf> (Consulted on 04/10/2017).
- **LANE, M.B., RICKSON, R.E. (1997).** ‘Resource development and resource dependency of indigenous communities: Australia’s Jawoyn Aborigines and mining at Coronation Hill’, *Society and Natural Resources*, 10, pp.121- 142.
- **Lapinand, P. Francis, D., and Rossiasco. P. (2011).** ‘Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and Conflict Analysis for Change’. Washington DC: *The Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars Africa Program and Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity.*
- **MORO, A. I. (2010).** *Socio-Political Crisis in the Niger Delta.* Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- **National Bureau of Statistics, (2011/ 2012).** From: <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/> (Consulted on 02/2016).
- **National Bureau of Statistics, (2020).** From: <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/> (Consulted on 03/2021).

- **Natural Resource Governance Institute, (2019).** *Strong Laws, Poor Implementation Characterize African Resource Sector.* From : <https://resourcegovernance.org/news/strong-laws-poor-implementation-characterize-african-resource-sector> (Consulted on 27/08/2020).
- **NNOLI, O. E. (1980).** *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria.* Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishes, reversed edition.
- **NNOLI, O. E. (2000).** *Government and Politics in Africa: A Reader.* Harare: AAPS Books.
- **OBI, C. I. (2001).** *The Changing Forms of Identity Politics in Nigeria under Economic Adjustment, The Case of the Minorities Movement of the Niger Delta* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika institutet. Research Report N° 119.
- **OBI, C. I. (2010).** ‘Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria’s Oil- Rich Niger Delta’, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, Volume 30, Issue 1-2, pp. 219-236.
- **OBI, C. I., RUSTAD, S. A. (2011).** *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta, Managing the Complex Politics of Petro-Violence.* Zed Books. Sweden: The Nordic Africa Institute.
- **Ojakorotu, V. (ed). (2009).** *Contending Issues in the Niger Delta Crisis of Nigeria. Part of the Conflict and Development Series.* Bangkok, Houston, San Jose: Delray Beach, JAPSS Press, Inc.
- **Okoi, O. (2020).** “Peacebuilding and transformational change in Nigeria's oil region”, *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 37 (3); 223– 238.
- **OMEJE, K. (2006).** *High Stakes and Stakeholders, Oil Conflict and Security in Nigeria.* England: Ashagate Publishing Limited.
- **OMOROGBE, Y. (2003).** *Oil and Gas Law in Nigeria.* Nigeria: Malthouse Laws Book.
- **OMOTI, C.E. (2006).** ‘Socio-Demographic Factors of Adult Malignant Lymphomas in Benin City’, *Niger Postgrad Med J.*, 13 (3), pp. 256-260.
- **THE SHELL PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT COMPANY OF NIGERIA (SPDC).** From: <http://www.shellnigeria.com> (Consulted in 2016).
- **Ukpe, W. (2020).** “South South States lead in Nigerian unemployment”, *Nairametrics, micro-economic news*, From: <https://nairametrics.com/2020/08/16/south-south-states-lead-in-nigerian-unemployment/> (consulted on March 2021).