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Oil, Economy of Conflict and Underdevelopment of the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria

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Abstract: Crude oil have for about six decades been exploited mostly in the onshore and offshore areas of Niger Delta. Over $600 billion revenue has accrued to the country from oil. However, the character of the political elite have shaped the character of accumulation of the state and turned it into one of predatory accumulation. As, a result, very little of the huge revenues accruing from oil has been ploughed back into the areas that bear the heavy costs of oil production. On the other hand, oil activities have adversely impacted the environment with dire ramification on the traditional means of livelihoods of the people. This has led to pervasive poverty in the region. Protests by the people over their plight have been met with violence (physical and psychological) by the state. The oil economy has also stifled all other economic activities in the region. Thus, despite its oil wealth, the Niger Delta remains poor and depraved.

Keywords: Oil Economy of Conflict, Underdevelopment, Niger Delta.

INTRODUCTION

Protests and conflicts have been present in the Niger Delta even under colonialism. The spate of agitations in the region led to the set-up of the Willinks Commision by the Colonial Office in 1958. The protest were due to the under development of the area compared to other parts of the country. Oil business began in the region in 1956, following the discovery of oil at Oloibiri in commercial quantities. Since then the region has remained the epicentre of oil and gas production in Nigeria. However, anti-oil protests only began in the 1970s. In contrast to the 1990s however, the protests were non-violent (Danler & Brunner, 1996) and their intensity, distinctly lower. Earliest protests mostly involved; petitions and delegations of community leaders to present complaints to state officials (local and federal) and the oil companies. However, in the 1990s, the protests increased and also highly publicised but they remained non-violent. For instance, on December 14, 1994, people of Nembe (later an epicentre of militancy) merely gathered at the town's waterfront, to present their demands to the government and oil companies and then departed for their homes (The Guardian, 1994). Occasionally, there were also boycotts, and picketing of oil company locations.

However, the oil-host communities' expression of legitimate social demands and grievances never yielded any positive response from the oil companies' executives or state officials. On the other hand, any protest has always evoked indignation, hostility and sanctions from the state. Mostly, discrimination is not made between women or men, young or aged, strong or infirm. The paradigmatic case of protests was the Ken Saro-Wiwa led Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) that internationalised the protests in the region. The first of MOSOP's mass protests took place in 1993 and although they were peaceful, the protests led to a wave of state repression of the Ogoniland; hundreds of persons were detained (Ibeanu & Mohammed, 2005), several villages destroyed and countless others killed (Danler & Brunner, 1996), Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his compatriots inclusive. The Abacha military regime also, covertly triggered violent boundary disputes between Ogoni and its neighbours; Andoni, Okrika and Ndoki (Ibeanu & Mohammed, 2005). The brutal repression of the Ogonis, was intended to annihilate anti-oil protests in the Niger Delta. But this was not to be, as violence hitherto limited to Ogoni became a phenomenon in all oil-host communities (Ogbia 1992; Igbide 1992; Diebu 1992; Uzere 1992; Burutu & Bomadi, 1992; Irri 1993 Osaghae, 1995; Naanen, 1995; &Welch, 1995).

Thus, by 1997 violent conflicts have not only increased but reached an unmatched intensity. Since then, violent protest; inter-communal violence, increasing clashes between armed militant groups and the security forces, and attacks against multinational oil companies have continued unabated. The central clashes include the "Warri crisis": violent protests struggles – including actions against oil companies – between the Ijaw and Itsekiri ethnic groups and the military after the relocation of a local government

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headquarter that killed hundreds of persons (Bergstresser 1998; & HRW, 2003). Furthermore, in late 1998 over 100 people died in clashes and raids after security forces shot at unarmed protesters (Zinn, 2005). In 1999, following the kidnapping and killing of twelve police men in Odi, Bayelsa state, security forces attacked and destroyed the town in which the murderers were suspected to live, killing 2,483 people (ICG, 2006).Violence appears to have further increased since 2003 (Hazen & Horner, 2007). For the years 2003 and 2004 various sources agree on death tolls of more than 500 people; by 2006 the number of people killed in violent conflict averaged 1,000 (AI, 2003; PRIO, 2004; Banjo, 2008; & IRIN, 2009). By 2008 following the Air force, Navy and Army coordinated air, land and sea attacks of Gbaramatu, in Delta state, deaths averaged 2000 people and over 20,000, others displaced from their ancestral homes. Alongside the inter-communal violence and the violent clashes between armed groups and the security forces, is another dimension of violence in the Niger Delta. This is the violent crime of kidnapping and blackmailing. The phenomenon of hostage taking, which first emerged in the 1990s, has increased significantly in recent years (Hazen & Horner, 2007; & ICG 2006), 167 people were kidnapped in 2007 (ICG, 2009). Initially, the victims were mainly foreign oil workers but more at an increasing rate, Nigerians, who are often released after ransom. In an effort to harm the oil industry and also to gain more publicity, myriads actors have also targeted and sabotaged oil pipelines and other oil facilities (Zinn, 2005; & TCND 2008). The state security forces have often, resorted to more coercive measures to deter further violence and attacks on oil facilities, leading to cyclic conflicts in the region.

OIL AND ECONOMY OF CONFLICT: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Nigeria's crude oil resources are exploited mostly in the onshore and offshore areas of the Niger Delta. Oil-related rents are the lifeblood of the nation's economy. Paradoxically, the vast revenues from the oil industry have barely touched the pervasive poverty in the region. The relationship between the oil companies and the Nigerian state, it appears, is bound by an economic mutuality that is underscored by the states' dependence on oil rents (Forrest, 1993; & Karl, 1997) on one hand and the oil companies' reliance on the state's guarantee of the necessary conditions for oil extraction on the other. In this context, therefore, the operational ethics of the oil companies is hinged solely on cost reduction and profits maximisation; an ethic that reaps the full advantages of operating in a political context marked by extraversion. This is because the political elite who dominate all levels of the state have strong interests in the sharing, appropriation and utilisation of oil revenues (Emuedo, 2010). Nigerian politics is thus, regarded largely as a means of accumulating wealth. Since the state is the object of political competition and medium for the allocation of resources, it has been used as a means to primitive accumulation of wealth. This has resulted in the privatisation of the state by custodians of power at all levels of governance (federal, state and local), and its consequent utilisation for the pursuit of individual, sectional and ethnic interests; as against the pursuit of the common interests or the public good (Nnoli, 1980; Oyovbuaire, 1980; Ake, 2001; & Aaron, 2006).

Oil reinforced contradictions that were already present in the colonial and post-colonial Nigerian state. Thus, even at independence, political competition was never about policy options of development. The state instead was a means for prebendal politics organised around allocation of the national 'cake' among competing claimants, with little conception of the public good, or of the state's responsibility to generate growth or promote social equity. In other words the state was refashioned as an instrument for private accumulation and money politics, where wealth, patronage and ethnic mobilisation determined access to political power. This is the reason why over $50bn of the $270bn oil revenues that got into government coffers have vanished (Watts, 2004). This character of the political elite have shaped the character of accumulation of the Nigerian state and turned it into one of predatory accumulation. The patterns of interaction between the state and the multi-national oil companies, which have responsibility for the exploration and production of oil, have tended to enhance this predatory pattern of accumulation. This has over the years shaped the whole socio-political landscape of the Niger Delta and its inhabitants, whose environment have been despoiled by oil activities. Oil was one of the political issues behind the Nigerian civil war of 1967–70 that almost tore the country apart, caused a million war-related deaths and displaced some 6 million people (Ibeanu & Luckham, 2007). Since then, the country has remained in a state of suppressed, 'silent' or 'structural' or 'repressive' violence (Galtung, 1976; & Watts, 1983), punctured by periodic outbreaks of actual violence.

The nature and patterns of accumulation are thus, key factors in the oil conflicts. The key actors, clients, and partisans of the political economy seek to pursue, fast-track, secure, protect, and defend oil-related accumulation by desperate means, which include the threat and mostly the actual use of violence. However, given the centrality of oil rent to the nation's economy, the general political discourse in the country is pervaded by accumulation mentality. This mentality informs and structures the behaviour and socio-political orientations of the oil companies, communities (oil and non-oil), civil society and most other constituents of the State. Thus, the main interest of the dominant political elite is to maintain a deeply compromised and

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extraverted state conducive only to predatory accumulation. For the Niger Delta people therefore, at stake, is their right to save the environment against degradation by the state-oil company alliance to ensure their livelihoods. Thus, pollution of the environment from oil activities, strike at the heart of the conflicts as the peoples' survival seriously threatened. Polluted rivers, water bodies and lands have adversely impacted drinking water, fishing, flora and fauna putting an end to traditional livelihoods practices leading to acute poverty (Aina & Salau, 1992; Ifeadi & Nwankwo, 1988; Obi, 1992, 1995; Obi & Soremekun, 1995; Brooks, 1994; Emuedo *et al*., 2007; Emuedo, 2010, 2013; & Emuedo *et al*., 2012). Therefore as some writers have aptly opined, the peoples' resort to environmental activism are intended toward drawing attention to their sad plight in the print media and later, through violent protests, demonstrations, and blockades of oil installations (Obi, 1992; & Turner & Oshare, 1993).

OIL AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Kapucinski (1982) state that:

"*Oil creates the illusion of a completely changed life, life without work, life for free…. The concept of oil expresses perfectly the eternal human dream of wealth achieved through lucky accident. … In this sense oil is a fairy tale and like every fairy tale a bit of a lie*" (Kapucinski, 1982).

The Nigeria Bitumen Company and British Colonial Petroleum started oil exploration in Araromi in the present Ondo State in 1908. However, real oil business began in 1956 when SPDC then known as Shell D'arcy (licensed in 1937) discovered oil in commercial at Oloibiri in Bayelsa State. Oil export started at a moderate rate of 5,100 barrels per day in 1958 (Kashi & Watts, 2008; Emuedo, 2010; & Udosen *et al.*, 2010). Oil has been of vital importance for the national economy since the late 1960s. For during that decade the absolute oil production as well as the dependence of the country on oil exports increased significantly Table 1.

Table 1. Contribution of Crude-oil and Gas Export to Nigeria's Total Export 1960-2008

Year	Total Export	Non-Oil Export	Oil and Gas Export	Oil and Gas as % of Total Export
1960	339.40	330.60	8.8	2.30
1965	536.80	400.60	136.2	25.30
1970	885.70	376.00	509.6	57.50
1975	4,925.50	362.40	4,563.1	92.60
1980	14,186.70	554.40	13,632.3	96.00
1985	11,720.80	497.10	11,223.7	95.70
1990	109,886.10	3,257.60	106,626.5	97.00
1995	950,661.40	23,096.10	927,565.3	97.50
2000	1,945,723.30	24,822.90	1,920,900.4	98.70
2005	7,246,534.80	105,955.90	7,140,578.9	98.50
2006	7,324,680.50	133,594.90	7,191,085.6	98.10
2007	8,120,147.90	169,709.70	7,950438.3	97.90
2008	9,774,610.90	94,316.70	9,680,194.2	99.00

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria (2008) & Statistical Bulletin (Golden Jubilee Edition)

The Table 1, above shows that whilst in 1960, oil and gas export accounted for mere 2.30% by the mid 1970s oil and gas have accounted for a huge 92% of export on the average. The contribution of oil to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose from an infinitesimal 0.3% (1960), 9.20% (1970), to 39.00% in 2008 (Table 2).

Table 2. Contribution of Oil and Gas to national GDP at Current Basic Prices, 1960-2008 (billion Naira)

Year	Total GDP	Oil and Gas Contribution to GDP	% Contribution of Oil and Gas to GDP
1960	2,233.00	7.00	0.30
1965	3,110.00	106.80	3.40
1970	5,281.10	489.60	9.20
1975	21,475.20	4,165.50	19.30
1980	49,632.30	14,137.40	28.40
1985	67,908.60	11,375.20	16.70
1990	267,550.00	100,223.40	37.40
1995	1,933,211.60	766,518.00	39.60

***Corresponding Author:** Crosdel O. Emuedo

2000	4,582,127.30	2,186,682.50	47.70
2005	14,572,239.10	5,664,883.20	38.80
2006	18,564,594.70	6,982,935.40	37.60
2007	20,657,317.70	7,533,042.60	36.40
2008	23,842,170.70	9,299,524.80	39.00

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria (2008) & Statistical Bulletin (Golden Jubilee Edition)

What is worthy of note however, is that contribution of agriculture to GDP plunged from an appreciable 64.1% (1960), 47.6% (1970), 30.8% (1980), 39.0% (1990), 35.7% (2000) to 28.35% in 2002 (Adedipe, 2004). The downward spiral has continued since then. Nigeria's dependence on oil, measured by oil exports as a percentage of total national exports or by oil rents as a percentage of overall government revenue, has been extremely high since the middle of the 1970s and even higher than, for example, that of petro-state Venezuela (Ebeku, 2006; Lubeck *et al.*, 2007; & Emuedo 2010, 2017). Oil has been Nigeria's main "driver" of the economy; providing 80% of state revenues, 90% of foreign exchange earnings and 96% of export revenues (Ohiorhenan 1984; Ikein 1990; Forrest 1995; Powell *et al*., 2005; ICG, 2006; & UNSD, 2009). The oil is exploited in the onshore and offshore areas of the region but most is lifted from about 6006 oil wells from 250 oil fields (Watts, 2008) dotting the region's landscape. Today Nigeria is the 11th largest oil producer in the world and, due to its low internal consumption, the 8th largest oil exporter (BFAI, 2008). Nigeria's steady oil production rise since inception till 2007 is shown in Table 3. Nigeria it is said earns an about $60 billion annually from its oil and gas resourses located in the Niger Delta (Ploch, 2011) and has earned in the past 50 years over $600 billion (Wurthmann, 2006; Watt, 2007; & Steiner, 2008). Between 1970 and 1999, the Nigerian oil sector generated about $231 billion in rents, or $1900 for every man, woman, and child (Ross, 2003), which has enhanced the country's socio-economic development.

Table 3. Nigeria's Oil Production and Export 1958 – 2007

Year	**Production (Million Barrel)**	**Year**	**Production (Million Barrel)**
1958	1.9	1982	470.6
1959	4.1	1983	450.9
1960	6.4	1984	507.5
1961	16.8	1985	547.1
1962	24.6	1986	535.9
1963	27.9	1987	482.9
1964	44.0	1988	529.0
1965	99.0	1989	626.7
1966	152.4	1990	660.6
1967	116.6	1991	689.9
1968	51.9	1992	711.3
1969	196.3	1993	695.4
1970	395.8	1994	696.2
1971	558.7	1995	715.4
1972	655.3	1996	681.9
1973	719.4	1997	855
1974	823.3	1998	806.4
1975	660.1	1999	774.7
1976	758.1	2000	828.3
1977	766.1	2001	859.6
1978	696.3	2002	725.9
1979	845.5	2003	844.1
1980	760.1	2004	900.0
1981	525,291	2005	919,286
		2006	814.0
		2007	880.0

Source: Compiled by Author from field data

***Corresponding Author:** Crosdel O. Emuedo

However, for the Niger Delta people, over fifty years of oil exploration and exploitation has brought Kapucinski's lie home to them in bold relief. Activities of the oil industry have led to myriads of social, environmental, and economic problems resulting in the collapse of the local economy (Elis, 1994; Amadi & Tamuno, 1999; Emuedo, 2014; Emuedo *et al*., 2014; & Emuedo & Abam, 2015). Over 150 million cubic metres of gas about $30.6 billion dollars worth, is flared in Niger Delta annually. This is equivalent to 25% of US gas consumption, or 30% of European Union (EU) annual gas usage (World Bank, 2009). About 16.8 billion cubic meters of gas was flared in the region in 2007 (Newsblog, 2009). This is despite various ultimatums given by the Nigeria state for an end to gas flaring; the deadline was set for 31st December, 2010 by Nigerian Senate (Thisday, 2009). As at June 2010 it was estimated that about 546 million gallons of oil or the equivalent of an Exxon Valdez spill yearly, have spilled into the ecosystems of the Niger Delta in over 50 years of oil production (Nassiter, 2010; & Francis, *et al*., 2011). Between 1976 and 2001 a total of 6,817 oil spills were recorded, with 70% unrecovered (UNDP, 2006). The NOSDRA recorded another 2,405 spills between 2006 and mid-2010, with an increasing trend year-on-year: 252 in 2006, 598 in 2007, 927 in 2008 and 628 in 2009. It rose again in 2010 (Ezigbo, 2010) partly because the over 7,000 square km of aged pipelines linking 6006 oil wells (Watts, 2007) in the region needed replacement (Francis, *et al*., 2011). Oil spills have impacted most oil communities in the region (Table 4).

Table 4. Some Severely Oil Polluted Sites in the Niger Delta

Location	Environment	Impacted Area (ha)	Nature of Incidence
Bayelsa State			
Biseni	Freshwater Swamp Forest	20	Oil Spillage
Etiama/Nembe	Freshwater Swamp Forest	20	Oil Spillage & Fire Outbreak
Etelebu	Freshwater Swamp Forest	30	Oil Spill Incidence
Peremabiri	Freshwater Swamp Forest	30	Oil Spill Incidence
Adebawa	Freshwater Swamp Forest	10	Oil Spill Incidence
Diebu	Freshwater Swamp Forest	20	Oil Spill Incidence
Tebidaba	Freshwater Swamp Forest Mangrove	30	Oil Spill Incidence
Nembe creek	Mangrove Forest	10	Oil Spill Incidence
Azuzuama	Mangrove	50	Oil Spill Incidence
Delta State			
Opuekebe	Barrier Forest Island	50	Salt Water Intrusion
Jones Creek	Mangrove Forest	35	Spillage & Burning
Ugbeji	Mangrove	2	Refinery Waste
Ughelli	Freshwater Swamp Forest	10	Oil Spillage-Well head leak
Jesse	Freshwater Swamp Forest	8	Product leak/Burning
Ajato	Mangrove		Oil Spillage Incidence
Ajala	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Uzere	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Afiesere	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Kwale	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Olomoro	Freshwater Swamp Forest		QC
Ughelli	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Ekakpare	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Ughevwughe	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Ekerejebe	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Ozoro	Freshwater Swamp Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Odimodi	Mangrove Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Ogulagha	Mangrove Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Otorogu Forest	Mangrove		Oil Spillage Incidence
Macraba	Mangrove Forest		Oil Spillage Incidence
Rivers State			
Rumuokwurusi	Freshwater Swamp	20	Oil Spillage
Rukpoku	Freshwater Swamp	10	Oil Spillage

Source: FME, NCF, WWF UK, CEEP-IUCN 2006 Niger Delta Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Project.

According to Ifeadi & Nwankwo (1989) about 62.8% of the oil spills occur on agricultural lands. This has caused degradation that has turned hitherto farming areas into wastelands (Odjuvwuedehie *et al.*, 2006) due

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to acute soil infertility. Dwindling farm outputs have forced women to abandon their land with no alternative means of livelihood. This is because oil hampers proper soil aeration; oil films on the solid surface, acts as a physical barrier between air and the soil (Chindah & Braide, 2000). Also, oil spills causes the release of liquid hydrocarbons and other toxic chemical substances into farmlands that hamper crops output (Awobajo, 1981). A major problem associated with oil spills is that often a year's supply of food can be destroyed instantaneously (Anderson & LaBelle, 2000).

As a result, simultaneous to the increase in crude oil production, is the decline in agricultural products. Agricultural produce constituted approximately 80% of total national exports in 1960 but by 1976, agriculture accounted for only 4% (Mogues, 2008). Before the advent of oil, Nigeria's economy depended solely on agricultural commodities. Palm oil became an export commodity for Nigeria as far back as 1558, and by 1830, the Niger Delta, which now produces crude oil, had become the major source of palm oil that dominated Nigeria's export list for more than 50 years. Cotton got into the export list in 1856, while cocoa became an export crop in 1895. These crops together with rubber, groundnut, palm kernel and benni-seed later, formed the main source of revenue, export and foreign exchange for the country. In fact, agriculture provided 72% of the total national output of the economy, in 1950, as against 1.1% by mining and oil. The dominant role of agriculture in the nation's fortune continued in 1960 when its contribution stood at 66%, compared to 1.2% from minerals. Also, at independence in 1960, more than 70% of exports came from agriculture, while 95% of the nation's food needs were locally produced. In 1970, GDP stood at N3.46 million, out of which crude oil contributed a mere 7.5%. In addition, before the advent of crude oil the nation was self-sufficient in food, as the country produced 95% of its food needs. As such food never appeared on the country's import list until the early 1970s, when crude oil had upstaged agriculture (Tell, 2008). Results of myriads research show that oil has reduced yield of most common food crops in the Niger Delta. These include; sweet potato (Udoinyang, 2005), cassava/yam (Odjugo, 2007), egusi (melon) (*Citrusllus Lanatus*) Odjugo (2010), *Abelmoschus esculentus*, a vegetable (Oyedeji *et al*., 2012; & Agbogidi, 2010), maize (*Zea mays* L.) Udo & Fayemi (1975), cocoyam, yam, pineapple, cassava (*Manihot esculenta*) banana, pepper (*Piper spp*.), okra and waterleaf (*Talinum triangulare*) (Dublin–Green, 1998, 1999; & Dung *et al*., 2008), and virtual extinction of edible frog (Okhere), small red cray fish (Iku-ewhewhe), iguana (Ogborigbo) and cocoyam (Idu) (Emuedo, 2010). Today, the Niger Delta suffers food insecurity due to acute adverse impact of oil on the environment Table 5.

Table 5. Estimated yield and demand for some food crops in the coastal wetlands of the Niger Delta in 2010

Crops	Supply/MT	Demand/MT	Deficit/MT
Cassava	14,8 97	24,41 3	-9516
Maize	1, 774	4,6 02	-2,828
Y am	12,4 62	24,47 5	12,013
Plantain	3, 385	8,4 73	-5,788
Vegetable	7,7 66	13,55 4	-5,788
Fruits	8,7 52	14,83 9	-6,087

Source: Ojimba and Iyaba, 2012

Crude oil reduces soil fertility (Osuji & Nwoye, 2007), smothers economic trees and food crops, out-rightly kills them and reduces yield (Edema *et al*., 2009), which often may cause up to 60% reduction in household food supply (Ordinioha & Sawyer, 2008). Also fish and other aquatic communities are impacted by changes in water quality due to pollution (Patil, 1976; Obeng, 1981; &Ogbeibu & Ezeunara, 2002). Poor water quality from acute pollution may have accounted for the decrease of fish species in the Niger Delta. For example, Aghoghovwia *et al*. (2015) recorded only 34 species in 9 study areas against the find of 91 species by earlier studies' (Okia-Anie, 1980; Okumagba, 1988; Dibia, 1989; Tetsola & Egborge, 1991; & Agada, 1994).

The ultimate economic effect of environmental impacts of oil production activities in the Niger Delta is to catalyse shrinkage in the standard of living of the people. The economic effects are vast; including dislocation of traditional economic activities and pursuits of daily livelihood as well as impairment of human health. Not unexpectedly, these economic effects translate to pecuniary effects on the people that can be measured in terms of reduced real incomes and the loss of alternative uses of resources consumed by oil companies. The effects described above can be referred to as *first round effects*, as there are also *second round effects*, which have longer-term welfare implications. Each round of environment degrading activity not only tend to increase incidence of poverty among the most vulnerable groups; farmers, fishermen and their dependants, but also, energises intense exploitation of existing natural resources, such as timber and non-timber forest resources. Pollution of main coastal fishing waters has led to immense exploitation of marginal fishing waters. In the same manner, resultant pressure from land pollution has also led to the exploitation of marginal farmlands; over-farming and deforestation, giving rise to a new wave of

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environmental degradation. This has created a vicious circle between environmental degradation and incidence of poverty, particularly in the absence of mitigating measures by both the state and the oil companies, to provide alternative sources of livelihood for the people so deprived.

OIL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It is a fact that due to its crude oil production and reserves estimated at over 36 billion barrels (Robinson, 2006), the Niger Delta is strategically vital to both the domestic and international economies. Nigeria is the largest producer of oil in Africa and the seventh largest in the world (Ajanaku, 2008). Oil has for over four decades, been the linchpin of the Nigerian economy (Ikein, 1990; Khan, 1994; & Lewis, 1996). Oil in 2006 accounted for 80% of state revenues, 90% of foreign exchange earnings, 96% of export revenues and almost half of GDP (Watts, 2008; ICG, 2006; Agbu, 2005; Powell *et al*., 2005; & Karl & Gray, 2003). However, both the state and the oil multinationals factored the oil-host communities out of the oil business, as such; their welfare is considered irrelevant. For instance Shell, the foremost oil multinational spent only a paltry 0.000007% of the over $30 billion of oil it extracted from the region on community assistance in 25 years (Rowell, 1994). In like manner, the state also used less than 3% of the $183.1 billion revenues it realised from oil between 1970 and1978 in developing the region (Saro-Wiwa, 1992; & Dappa-Biriye *et al*., 1992). For over five decades, oil resources in the Niger Delta have earned huge revenues for the Nigerian state. Despite this, the area has been continually short changed, due to poor governance structures; unequal access, skewed distribution of economic resources and obtuse neglect. Though oil has sustained Nigeria's economic growth and improved the standard of living of other non-oil producing regions; this has been at the expense of the areas where the oil resources exported to metropolitan countries in return for the importation of capital is produced. Many Nigerian cities have been developed with the oil wealth while towns and villages in the Niger Delta have become derelict.

In early 2000, an epochal event, the commissioning of a four-pump petrol filling station, took place in Yenagoa, capital of Bayelsa state. The event made headline in all major news networks round the world including BBC and CNN. The service station was the first, in the state after over 40 years of oil exploitation. Bayelsa State is the cradle of crude oil production in Nigeria, that the commissioning of a four-pump petrol station made world-wide headlines affirms the state's level of under-development. Also, Bayelsa state was also only partially connected to the national grid in 2006, during President Obasanjo's two-days (October 21-22) working visit to the state. Until then, the state had been without electricity with the exception of the capital Yenagoa that relied on an epileptic gas turbine for electricity. Additionally, the contract for the dualisation of the Benin to Warri portion of the east-west highway (100, km.) was awarded the same day that the contracts for the dualisation of Kaduna to Kano (over 200, km.) and Abuja to Kaduna (150 km) were awarded in 1987. But over 30 years after the completion of both roads and even rehabilitated twice; the Benin to Warri road remain uncompleted. In fact it only partially completed in 2007. The Warri to Port Harcourt portion of the same road became a death trap due to the complete failure of several major portions of the road. The contract for the dualisation of this vital road was awarded in August 2006, only after militant youths in the Niger Delta escalated the violence in the area; massive attack on oil facilities and resulting in the shutting in of over half of the country's daily oil production. According to then President Obasanjo, the project was delayed for more than forty years due to the cost estimated at about ₦250 billion. However, it must be noted that the country makes more than that amount daily from the region in oil and gas sales. The real tragedy of President Obasanjo statement, is that the Nigerian state is unwilling or is unable to afford to spend less than what it makes from the region in one day even for its development, except forced to do so.

The escalation of violence in the region impacted oil facilities leading to a reduced oil production and oil associated revenues. This forced the state to engage in some tokenistic development efforts in the region. However, the violence also came with unintended catastrophic economic effects. Though, the violence was directed at the oil companies, it had domino effects on other firms the region. Burutu, a riverine Ijaw town and capital of Burutu local government area aptly illustrates the impact of the violence economic activities in the Niger Delta. From the colonial era till early 1980s, Burutu was a flourishing commercial and industrial town. It had a busy port, the fourth largest in Nigeria and home to many companies; John Holt, Bendel Timber and Plywood Company (BTPC), Niger River Transport Company (NRT), Bulk Oil and Petroleum Company (BOP), Texaco, Westminster Dredging, Delta Boat Yard, etc. However, today Burutu is a ghost town, left are kilometres of empty dilapidated houses; erstwhile staff quarters of dead companies. The situation in Burutu is replicated in all the riverine towns of the Niger Delta. In Sapele, the modern port was converted to a Naval Training School, while several companies including, African Timber and Plywood Company (AT&P), West African shrimps, Integrated Rubber Company, Omimi Shoe Factory and Mitchel Farms have closed down. The port in Koko was also converted to a Naval Base. In Warri, Globestar Nigeria Limited, Mcdemott, Inland Water Ways, Briscoe motors, GB Olivant, Bendel Steel Structures, Edewor Oil Mills, Challarams Stores, Kingsway Stores, Leventis Stores, Leventis Motors, Kewarams Stores, Mix and Bake

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Flour Mill, Niger Benue Transport Company and Delta Boat Yard have all closed up. These companies in their hay-days have a minimum average of about 600 workers in their employ. The situation in the region reinforces Guha & Martinez-Alier (1997) assertion that oil in an area impacts grave negative costs to economic opportunities. Juxtaposed with oil-polluted environment that has dislodged the people from their traditional means of livelihood, the effect of poverty in the area occasioned by oil activities can better be imagined. It is therefore not a surprise that the poverty profile of the Niger Delta states has risen Table 6.

Table 6. Poverty Profile (Headcount) of the Niger Delta by States

Years	**1980**		**1985**		**1992**		**1996**		**2004**		
Category	C P	M P	C P	M P	C P	M P	C P	M P	C P	M P	P I
Delta	4.7	15.1	17.5	34.9	8.0	25.9	20.7	35.4	45.35	33.09	45.35
Rivers and Bayelsa	1.3	5.6	8.1	36.3	16.0	27.4	19.1	25.2	29.09	19.98	29.09
Nigeria	6.2	21.0	12.1	34.2	13.9	28.9	29.3	36.3	22.0	32.4	54.4

Source: FOS (Federal Office of Statistics), Poverty profile for Nigeria 1980-1996, Lagos, 1999 and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Poverty profile for Nigeria, Abuja, 2005 (March)

Note: In the 2004 survey, results were reported separately for each of the two states which in the 1996 survey were still one state. Rivers and Bayelsa were formerly Rivers State.

Key: C. P– Core Poor M. P– Moderately Poor P I – Poverty Index

Table 6 depicts the poverty profile of the region. It is observed that whereas poverty level was below national average in 1980, by 1996 it had risen above national average. Also, though incidence of poverty in the south-south zone (Niger Delta) was much lower than in the other zones, especially the northern zones in 1980; the gap had narrowed significantly, in 1985 and in 1996; which shows worsening poverty in the region Table 7.

Table 7. Poverty Profile (Headcount) of Nigeria by Geopolitical Zones

Years	**1980**		**1985**		**1992**		**1996**		**2004**		
Category	C P	M P	C P	M P	C P	M P	C P	M P	C P	M P	P I
North East	11.8	23.8	16.4	38.5	18.5	35.5	32.2	36.4	27.9	44.3	66.1
North West	8.3	29.4	14.2	37.9	9.0	27.6	34.9	39.7	26.8	44.3	62.4
North Central	5.7	26.5	16.4	34.4	14.8	31.2	21.2	35.7	29.8	37.2	62.3
South East	2.4	10.6	5.4	25.0	15.7	25.3	28.3	33.4	7.8	19.0	34.0
South West	2.1	11.3	9.0	29.6	15.7	27.4	27.5	33.4	18.9	24.2	42.7
South South	3.3	10.0	9.3	36.4	13.0	27.8	23.4	34.8	17.0	18.1	50.5

Source: FOS (Federal Office of Statistics), Poverty profile for Nigeria 1980-1996, Lagos, 1999 and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Poverty profile for Nigeria, Abuja, 2005 (March)

It would in fact seem that the general situation in the country before the advent of oil is better than the situation after oil became the pivot of the nation's economy Table 8.

Table 8. Percentage of Population Living on Less than One Dollar per Day

Year	**1970**	**1980**	**1985**	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**
Population	35%	27%	38%	54%	70%	67%	70%

Source: Data for 1970–2000: Sala-i-Martin 2003; data for 2005; IMF 2007.

As shown by Table 8 above, in 1970 just before become the main revenue earner for the country, the poverty level of the population was 35%. However, by 2005 when oil was the main revenue earner of the country in comparison to non-oil revenue sources, the poverty level climbed to over 70%. This figure of 70% it should be noted is for population that was much higher than Nigeria's population in 1970. Poverty seem still prevalent in the country; a 2008 survey showed that 70% of the people live on less than one dollar a day and over 80% on less than two dollars a day (UNDP, 2008). The fact of the dominance of oil revenues since the 1990s over other sources of revenues for the state is shown on Table 9 below.

Table 9. Revenue from Oil and Non-oil Resources in Billions of Naira (USD in bracket)

S/N	**Year**	**Oil Revenue in N($)**	**Non-oil Rev. in N ($)**	**Total Rev. in *N ($)***
1	1999	738,797.7 *($5.277bn)*	210,389.2 ($1.503bn)	949,187.9 ($6.780bn)

***Corresponding Author:** Crosdel O. Emuedo

2	2000	1,591,675.8 *($11.369bn)*	314,483.9($2.246bn)	1,906,742.7 ($13.620bn)
3	2001	1,711,460.5 *($12.225bn)*	485,282.2($3.467bn)	2,196,742.7 ($15.691bn)
4	2002 (May)	505,353.0($3.610bn)	178,968.5($1.278bn)	684,321.5 ($4.888bn)

Source: Arinze, 2006

Table 9 shows oil revenue as the main source of the nation's total income. However, the increased oil revenues have not led to expansion in social and infrastructure expenditures. The Niger Delta is still characterised by near total insufficient access to health care, (drinking) water, and electric power; moreover, the housing situation is generally worse than that in the rest of the country (UNDP, 2001; & IDEA, 2001). All these aspects constitute central factors in the dissatisfaction of the Niger Delta people and contribute to an enhanced potential for conflict.

Another factor that should also be mentioned in the context of insufficient resource management, but which is also a general problem resulting from economic distortions in oil economies, is widespread unemployment. The oil industry in general is very capital intensive rather than labour intensive. In Nigeria this structural problem is particularly pronounced, as crude oil is hardly processed within the country but rather exported. The country presently imports over 85% of the refined petroleum products it consumes (EIA, 2009). The oil industry employs only about 35,000 people, directly and indirectly (AI, 2005). In the Niger Delta where the oil industry has destroyed jobs in the agricultural sector, the state has failed to apply counter measures (Kappel, 1991). As a result, unemployment, especially youth unemployment is extremely high in the region, markedly higher than in other parts of the country (IDEA, 2001; UNDP, 2006; & Aigbokhan, 2007). Indeed, Academic Associates Peace Works (AAPW) survey of the members of armed groups in three Niger Delta states underscores the link between unemployment and violent protests. According to the survey "at least 50% of members of armed groups claimed that they were unemployed, had no profession, or worked in unpaid jobs" (Sesay *et al.*, 2003; & Hazen & Horner, 2007).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The situation of Niger Delta environment is gloomy as, oil business in the region has been conflict ridden. This has arisen from the oil multinational failure to observe best practices in their operation in the region. As a result, oil operations in the region have led to serious adverse impacts on the environment. This has dislodged the people from their tradition means of livelihood, exposing them to economic quagmire. The precarious situation faced by the people in the mix of stupendous oil wealth gave rise to protests, aimed at drawing attention to their plight. However, rather than deploy measures to ameliorate the situation, the state embarked on repression measures. The resultant face off between the state and the oil companies on one hand and the people on the other, has led to economy of conflict in the region. The vitriolic situation persisted till a thaw was achieved by the amnesty proclaimed by the Shehu Ya'Adua's administration in 2009. However, tension has continued to simmer in the region. The implication is that unless the state changes its policy in the region and deploy serious measures to ameliorate the situation oil operations will continue to face threat of violence.

Permanent peace can be attained in the region by reducing environmental pollution. This can only be achieved by the use of improved technologies and techniques, ensuring best practices in oil activities in the region. A main focus should be gas flaring and venting that causes most of the air pollution. Technological advances in valve design have the potential to reduce emissions, whilst improved flare design has increased combustion efficiency. Also of produced water into either into the reservoir or into another formation seems like a practical solution is common practice in the industry, however the truth is such suitable geological formations are getting harder to come by in the Niger Delta, often in cases where the reinjection operation is carried out, seepage/discharge into the groundwater is an aftermath.

Reuse, recycling and recovery of waste materials include the use of drill cuttings for brick manufacture and road bed material, use of flared gas for fuel, and used of produced water as wash water – this is actually a good beneficial use for materials that would otherwise be toxic to the environment.

Drilling techniques like horizontal drilling, slim-hole drilling and heliportable drilling provide considerable environmental advantages, such as minimizing land take and footprint, reduction in waste material. The use of vibroseis on land and air guns seems to reduce dependence on explosives as well which are comparatively more detrimental.

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