

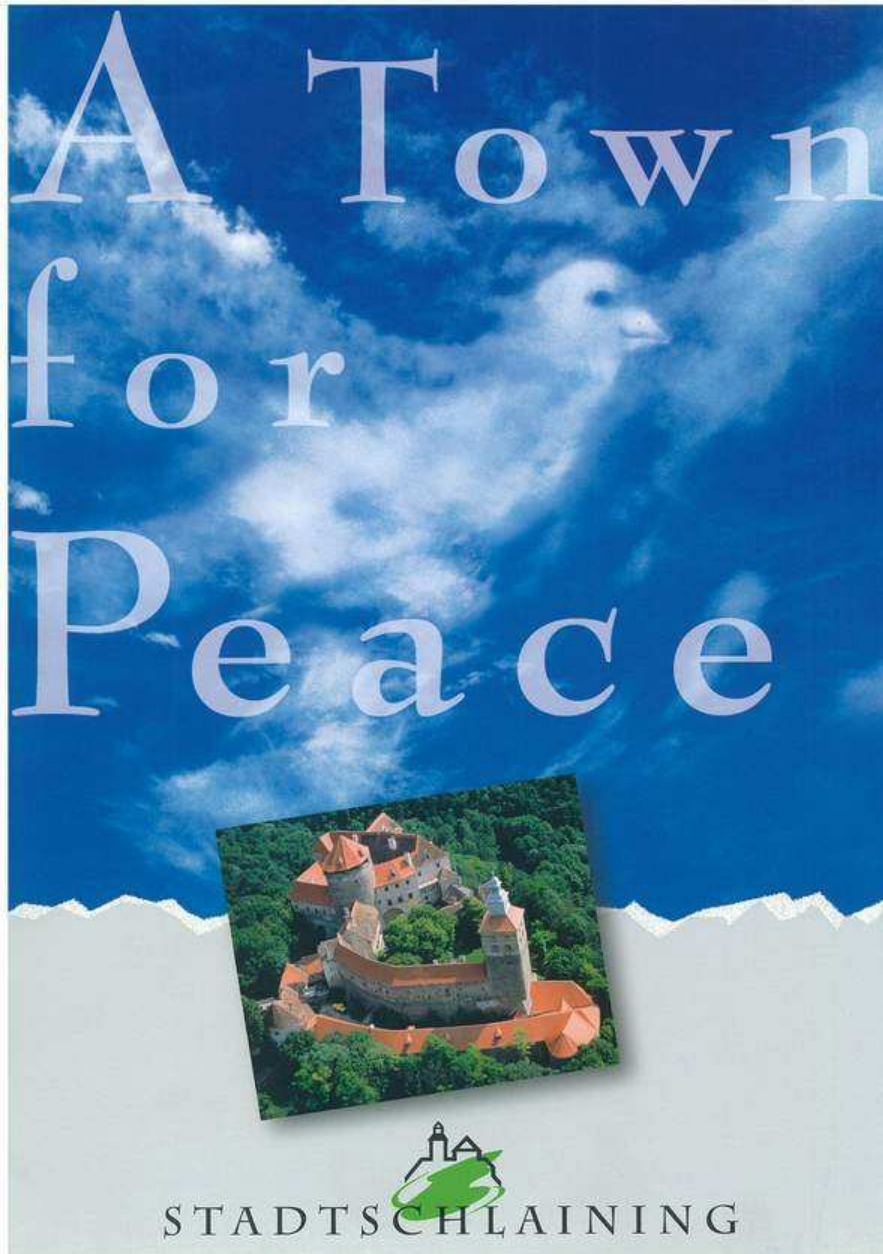


EPU Research Papers

# NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA CRISIS: ROOT CAUSES OF PEACELESSNESS

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## Introduction

The presence of oil resources in developing countries presents a huge paradox<sup>1</sup>. On the one hand, oil and gas discoveries make the eradication of poverty and the development of strong economies a possibility. This is what happened, for example, in Texas and Alaska in the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. More recently, in 2004, then Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri of East Timor declared that oil discoveries in the Timor Gap could provide “ the money to immunize and educate every child”<sup>2</sup> in his country, one of the world’s newest and poorest states. Angola, too, sees its burgeoning oil industry as a means of escaping poor economic conditions. On the other hand, the “curse of oil” is evident in many oil-rich countries worldwide, with oil-producing states showing a high incidence of corruption and violent conflict, and low scores in education and health services and economic strength. Of the seventy-four countries to be in situations of current or potential conflict by the International Crisis Group in February 2006, 35 percent have known oil and gas resources<sup>3</sup>. One of such countries is Nigeria in the oil rich Niger Delta region.

The oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been embroiled in crisis between the government forces and some militant elements that are aggrieved over certain fundamental issues affecting the Region. Since the last two years, militants have fought with government forces, sabotaged oil installations, taken foreign oil workers hostage and carried out lethal car bombings. At the root of the problem is a crisis of underdevelopment. The crisis has been exacerbated by emergent issues of a gross distortion of Nigerian federalism in respect to resource control; citizenship rights and environmental degradation. Unfortunately, the external manifestation has been mainly that of violent agitations and criminal activities of some elements taking advantage of the bad situation.

The crisis portends a very grave danger for the Niger Delta Region in particular and the Nigerian State in general. The truth of the matter is that the militants are not only confronting the Nigerian state, they are also at war with an extension of global capitalism represented in the region by the multinational oil companies. The situation, if not curtailed, could lead to a serious war between the armed militants and the Federal Government of Nigeria. The seriousness of the problem and

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<sup>1</sup> Jill Shackleman, “Oil Profits and Peace: Does Business Have A role in Peacemaking?” United States Institute of Peace, 2006, P.3

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> International Crisis Group, “Crisis Watch”, February 2006, <http://www..org/home/index.cfm?id> (accessed July 10, 2007)

its effect on the country made former President Shehu Shagari, during his visit to Port Harcourt, in the Niger Delta of Nigeria to declare that:

“the biggest problem Nigeria faces today, in my humble opinion, is the problem with the militants in the Niger Delta area”<sup>4</sup>.

This paper, which is divided in to five parts, examines the underlying factors responsible for the state of peacelessness in the Niger Delta; the effects or fall outs of the crisis; what should be done to arrest the crisis from degenerating and the way forward for the permanent resolution of the crisis that will bring about peace and sustainable development to the Region.

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<sup>4</sup> Shehu Shagari (Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria), BBC News, Wednesday, 30 May, 2007, Retrieved on 26 June, 2007

## **PART I**

### **Nigeria in brief**



(Figure 1: Map of Nigeria Source: <http://geography.about.com>)

Nigeria is in West Africa. The geographic coordinates are: 10 00 N, 8 00 E. It is bordered on the North by Niger and Chad, Cameroon on the East, the Atlantic Ocean on the South, and Benin Republic in the West. It is the most populous country in Africa with a population of 150 million people and covers an area of 923, 770 square kilometers or 356,700 square miles.<sup>5</sup>

Nigeria as an entity came into being in 1914 when the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated by Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard. The reason for the amalgamation was purely economic. The Southern Protectorate was more viable and had resources than the less endowed Northern Protectorate. In order to bridge the gap, the two protectorates were merged together.

Nigeria is made up of 36 states structure, with Abuja the Federal Capital. For political and administrative expediency in the sharing of offices, the country is divided into six geo-political groups, namely: South West, South East, South-South, North West, North East and North Central. The Niger Delta region is located in the South-South geo-political zone.

<sup>5</sup> Source: <http://Gography.about.com>, accessed June 26, 2007

## Resources

It is no secret that Nigeria is the sixth largest producer of oil and petroleum in the world, and that is the main stay of the economy, accounting for well over 90 per cent of the exports. The low sulfur content of much of Nigeria's petroleum makes it especially desirable in a pollution conscious world. There are other minerals available in Nigeria, and some of them are: Barite, Coal, Columbite, Fluorite, Gold, Iron Ore, Kyanite, Uranium, Natural Gas, Phosphate, Tin, etc, etc.

Before oil was discovered in 1957 in commercial quantity at Oloibiri, in present day Bayelsa State, Nigeria basically survived on agriculture for its economy, and for local consumption. Today, agriculture is still part of the domestic economy, but by the late 1960's, oil had replaced cocoa, ground nuts, and palm products as the country's largest foreign exchange earner.

Oil has been an important part of the Nigerian economy since vast reserves of petroleum were discovered. According to available records, Nigeria has earned over \$400 Billion as oil revenue since the early 70s.<sup>6</sup> Despite these huge foreign exchange earnings, the economy under performs, and the great majority of the people have not been able to derive much benefits. Poverty, unemployment, decay infrastructure, corruption at high level, misery, lack of basic human needs etc, etc seems to be the lot of the people. Oil rather being a blessing to the people, is now being regarded as a curse. This is because it has brought with it, negative things, rather than positive things.

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<sup>6</sup> International Crisis Group, Nigeria: Want in the Midst of Plenty (Africa Report No. 113, 19 July, 2006, P.1)



## Niger Delta Area In Perspective

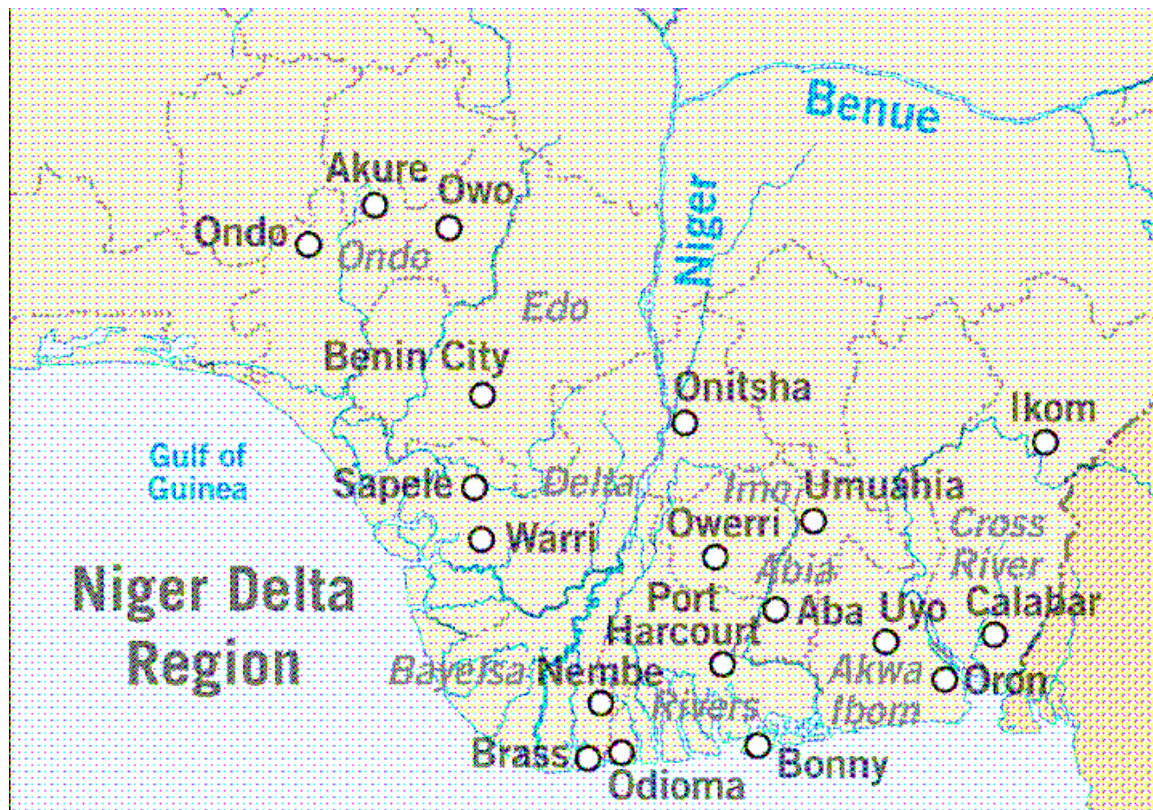


Figure 2: Map of the Niger Delta Area; Source: Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis (Crisis Group Africa Report No.118) 28 September, 2006; P.28

The Niger Delta covers an area of well over 70,000 square kilometers, covering the greater part of the South-South region of Nigeria. It has a population of about 15 million people and more than 40 ethnic groups with links to the linguistic groups of Ijaw, Edo, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio and Oron.

The Niger Delta is the largest wetland in Africa. It is rich in both renewable and non renewable natural resources such as oil, gas, bitumen, non timber forest products and timber forest products, wildlife, etc. 95 per cent of the total revenue for the Nigerian government is generated from oil and gas exploration<sup>7</sup>

There are seven states in the country that made up the Niger Delta Region: Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Edo, Delta, Rivers and Ondo. They are among the littoral states. Other states that are oil producing, but not in the Niger Delta Region are Abia and Imo States. Resentment against the Federal Government of Nigeria and

<sup>7</sup> Brisibe A. A: African Tradition "The Identity of a People: With special Focus on Globalization & Its Impact in the Niger Delta" C.O.O.L Conference, Boston, U.S.A, March 18, 2001, P.1

the activities of the oil companies are well pronounced in three states- Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. Also, the demand for the control of the oil wells by the people is more pronounced in the three states. The reason is that most of the oil wells are located in the three states and so they experience more oil drilling activities, including their effects on the people and the environment.

The sense of the relentless crisis has deepened since last year, when a secretive group of armed, hooded rebels operating under the name of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) intensified attacks on oil platforms and pumping stations, mostly operated by Shell Oil. Militants from MEND and other groups have killed soldiers and security guards, kidnapped foreign oil workers, set off car bombs, etc. According to the Brussels, Belgium, based International Crisis Group, “escalating violence in a region teeming with angry, frustrated people is creating a militant time bomb”.<sup>8</sup>

It is apt to ask, why are the people against the Federal Government and the oil companies? Why are they being violent in their approach and what are the factors responsible for their actions? The answer to these questions is the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>8</sup> Nigerian Oil, Curse of the Black Gold in <http://www7.nationalgeographic.com> ,accessed July 01, 2007



## **PART II**

### **Factors responsible for the Niger Delta Crisis**

The discovery of oil in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region in 1957 triggered a chain of events that has led to the political and economic marginalization of the inhabitants. Indeed, it has been argued that oil has been more of a curse than a blessing to the people who have been at the receiving end of horrendous government oppression and brutality, often resulting in fatalities. Despite 40 years of oil production and hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue, the local people remain in abject poverty without even the most basic amenities such as water and electricity.

Although the Niger Delta has a long history of violence, the situation has gone from bad to worse to disastrous recently to the emergence of armed militant groups willing to kill as part of their campaign for a greater share of the regions oil wealth.

The campaign for fair deal or control of the oil wells by the people did not start today. It started in 1966 when Isaac Adaka Boro led a rebellion with his Delta Volunteer Service (DVS) against the Federal Government and formed the Niger Delta Republic.<sup>9</sup> However, the rebellion was crushed, but it has brought consciousness into the minds of the people. The spirit and consciousness to bring to the international level, the suffering and deprivation of the people of the Niger Delta was championed by Ken Saro-Wiwa in the 90s. He applied peaceful, non-violent means reminiscent of the strategy and tactics of Mahatma Ghandi. He aimed to redress the political and socio-economic wrongs imposed on the Niger Delta people. He was tenacious and determined in pursuit of emancipatory ideals through the platform of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which he founded in 1992 with other likeminds. The government of General Sanni Abacha and the oil companies were not comfortable with the activities of Saro-Wiwa and his Movement. In no time, Saro-Wiwa was accused of inciting members of MOSOP to kill four Ogoni elders. He and eight other fellow compatriots were arranged for trial, in a military tribunal, set up by the despotic and repressive government of General Sanni Abacha, for the murder of the Ogoni four, convicted, and hanged in November 1995. However, "his more likely "crime" is his effort to organize the Ogoni ethnic minority to stop destruction of

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<sup>9</sup> Corruption in High Places: <http://www.unitedijawstates.com>, accessed June 27, 2007

their homeland caused by operations of Shell and Chevron, the multinational oil companies, and seek compensation for his people's lost farmland and fisheries".<sup>10</sup>

A decade after the hanging, the potential consequences of the Niger Delta conflict have escalated in both human and economic terms. Various militant groups have sprung up of recent to undermine the activities of the oil companies using different methods and tactics, thereby daring the Nigerian state. Prominent among such groups are the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), and Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSEIN).

Different reasons have been given as the *raison d'être* of the Niger Delta crisis; it is germane at this juncture, to examine the historical and societal underpinnings of the growing insurgency. The factors responsible for the crisis are discussed below:

(i) **Structural Deficiency of the Nigerian Federation:** it has always been discussed at fora, both national and international, that one of the factors responsible for the Niger Delta crisis is the structural injustices that led to the marginalization of the Niger Delta region in the Nigerian Federation. Historically, the Nigerian Federation has been dominated by three large ethnic groups-the Yoruba, Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani.

The British colonial government exploited this situation by ruling through the existing aristocracy, thereby reinforcing the historical imbalances already present. The post-colonial history of Nigeria has been marked by massive instability, including a number of military coup d'états, as a result of conflict between these three groups. The smaller ethnic groups in the Niger Delta have been systematically excluded from positions of power. Furthermore, under the 1999 constitution, mineral rights in Nigeria are held by the federal government, a structure which has been unresponsive to the Niger Delta grievances.

As a result, the people of the Niger Delta region have through various declarations like the Ogoni Bills of Right, Kaiama Declaration of the Ijaws, Akakalaka Declaration etc made request for self determination and resource control. For instance, the demand for self determination was brought to the fore in a statement issued by the Niger Delta Women at the end of their meeting held in Yenagoa,

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<sup>10</sup> ICE Case Study: Ogonis and Conflict; Factsheet on the Ogoni Struggle  
<http://www.insular.com/~tmc/politics/africa/ogoni.fact.html>

Bayelsa State, from 25-27 November, 1999. They declared: “Beginning with the Ogoni Bills of Rights in 1990, the ethnic nationalities of the Niger Delta have declared the intention and determination, to reclaim their human dignity and fundamental human rights. These declarations, the Ogoni Bills of Rights, the Kaiama Declaration, Akaka Declaration of the Egi People, the Oron Bill of Rights, the Warri Accord, Resolutions of the First Urhorobo Economic Summit, form the basis for the struggle for self-determination and control of resources by each community”.<sup>11</sup>

The same demand is contained in the manifesto of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Community Defence Law Foundation (CD-LF) fighting for the course of the Niger Deltans. The core

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11. Demands of the First Niger Delta Indigenous Women’s Conference of Bayelsa State held at Yenagoa, 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November, 1999, accessed from <http://www.google.com-Declaration> on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2007

issues in the manifesto includes: self determination and political autonomy within Nigeria; restructured federalism; environmental and resource control; social development; social development; international dialogue and solidarity; resolve to resistance; and transparency and accountability.<sup>12</sup>

(ii) **Poverty/Deprivation of the Means of Livelihood:** the government of Nigeria has made hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue in the last 40 years of oil production in the Niger Delta. Despite this huge amount of money, the local people remain in abject poverty and deprivation as they lack basic things of life like water and electricity. Life in the creeks of Niger Delta is anything but rich and prosperous. The region, according to Mukagbo, Cable Network News (CNN) anchorman for Inside Africa, “is a region where time seems to have stood still and where people live the most meager of existences, leaving them bitter and angry from not having benefited from the black gold that makes Nigeria Africa’s largest

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<sup>11</sup> Community Defense Law Foundation “Manifesto of the Niger Delta” in <http://www.thisdayonline.com>, accessed June 10, 2007

<sup>12</sup> Tumi Makagbo, CNN, Inside Africa aired on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com>, accessed June 26, 2007

producer”.<sup>13</sup> Commenting further on the deprivation being faced by the people Mukagbo, said “In Niger Delta, scenes of abject poverty pervades the area, very similar to what you find in a refugee camp. The region fetches the government oil revenue within the region of \$100M a day”.<sup>14</sup> Some leaders of the Niger Delta have alluded to the fact that poverty and deprivation is one of the reasons behind the agitation of the people of the region. Corroborating this assertion, Ken Saro-Wiwa, the murdered leader of Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) said during his trial at the military tribunal:

“My lord, we all stand before history. I am a man of peace, of ideas. Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living.....”.<sup>14</sup> Also amplifying this position, the facilitator of the Niger Delta Democratic Union, Barrister Mudiaga-Odje, in a statement he forwarded to the President of Nigeria, Umar Musa Yar’Adua, on the need to resolve Niger Delta crisis, said, “Mr. President should.... offer them reassurance, hope, employment and empowerment programmes, which will better their lives. The reason for the agitation in the region is deprivation and poverty amidst its plenty oil and gas resources”.<sup>15</sup> All these statements seems to have corroborated the World Bank view that poverty is one of the key causes of conflict in oil producing countries. The Bank in an outcome of a research conducted asserts that “the key root cause of conflict is the failure of economic development such that many of the world’s poorest countries are locked in a tragic vicious cycle where poverty causes conflict and conflict causes poverty” .<sup>16</sup>

(iii) **Environmental Damage:** the social and environmental costs of oil production have been very extensive. They include destruction of wildlife and biodiversity, loss of fertile soil, pollution of air and drinking water, degradation of farmland and damage to aquatic ecosystems, all of which have caused serious health problems for the inhabitants of areas surrounding oil production. It is ironical that environmental regulations which are common practice in developed nations are

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ken Saro-Wiwa, <http://www.unitedijawstates.com>: Corruption in High Places, accessed June 27, 2007

<sup>15</sup> The Punch Newspaper, June 11, 2007, P.9

<sup>16</sup> Jill Shankleman, Op. Cit, P.38

often not followed due to the lack of power, wealth and equity of the affected communities. As a result, oil companies often evacuate inhabitants from their homelands, further marginalizing them. The system of oil production in Nigeria is skewed in favour of the multi-nationals and government elite who are the direct recipients of oil production revenue.

As a result of environmental damage brought about by the activities of the oil companies, environmental problems like erosion; flooding; land degradation; destruction of natural ecosystem; fisheries depletion caused by dredging ; toxic waste into the rivers etc, etc are common phenomenon in the region. The local people can no longer take to farming and fishing which are their major occupations. As a result of the impact of oil activities on the environment and the ecosystem of the region, the United Nations warned in a report that “the degree and rate of degradation are pushing the Delta towards ecological disaster”<sup>17</sup>. The oil multinationals contributes significantly to the environmental destruction of the Niger Delta through the following ways:

(a) **Oil Spillage**

Oil spillage is a major problem in the region. The indigenes and the environment suffer from oil spillage and lack of coordinated efforts by the oil companies and the federal government to clean up as soon as oil spillage takes place. According to Etim (2003)<sup>18</sup>, a spillage from a pipeline owned by the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in the Karama Community of Okordia/Zarama Local Government Area of Bayelsa State in June 2003 caused enormous economic and environmental damage and hardship to the area. The spillage was not properly cleaned and the indigenes were not evacuated by the oil company. Community leaders in the area alleged that SPDC awarded the contract for cleaning the spillage to a company that did not do an effective job, thereby resulting in fires and destruction of the ecosystem.

(b) **Gas Flaring**

Just as the Western oil corporations are inflicting untold hardship on the citizens of the Niger Delta by engaging in oil exploratory activities with total disregard for the political and economic sensibilities of the people, they are also wrecking the fragile ecosystem of the region through uncontrollable gas flaring. Gases flaring takes place 24 hours and some have been burning for

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<sup>17</sup> Nigerian Oil, Curse of the Black Gold, op cit

<sup>18</sup> ICE Case Study: Ogonis and Conflict (op. cit, P.4)

over 30 years, thereby resulting in the release of hydrogen sulphide (sour gas). According to an expert, hydrogen sulphide produces sulfur oxides and when sulfur oxides mix with oxygen and water in the atmosphere, they produce acid rain. Acid rain causes innumerable negative effects on the world, particularly the people and the environment.<sup>19</sup> A Report by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) indicated that “everyday, eight million cubic feet of natural gas are burned off in flares that light the skies across the Delta, not only driving off 5 cms, hunting the fishing and poisoning the agriculture, but contributing to global warming”.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the oil companies are not only destroying the Niger Delta, they are also contributing to global warming. A statement by MOSOP on the effect of gas flaring on the people of Ogoni would show how it has negatively affected the life of the people. It read: “The once-beautiful Ogoni country side is no more a source of fresh air and green vegetation. All one sees and feels around is death.”<sup>21</sup>

(c) **Oil Pipeline Explosions**

To a certain extent, there is a relationship between pipeline explosions and oil spillage. In another sense, the two are not directly related. A spillage can take place while drilling is in progress. On the other hand, there is always spillage when there is an explosion. According to Torulagha (2001)<sup>22</sup>, pipeline explosions take place due to the following reasons: (1) during drilling activity at new site, (2) following an accidental bursting of pipeline work is taking place around the pipeline, (3) an old pipeline that has not been checked for maintenance, (4) vandalisation by angry youth and members of the host communities, (5) oil bunkerers who steal crude oil by intentionally breaking the pipelines. As a result of the consequences of oil explosion to lives, property and environment, people of Niger Delta have consistently blamed the oil companies and the federal government of Nigeria for showing non-challant attitudes and lacking any systematic mechanism to come to the aid of its citizens when emergency assistance is needed as a result of oil exploitation. A case in point was the Jesse, Delta State, pipeline explosion of October, 1998

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.unitedijawstates.com>, accessed June 27, 2007

<sup>20</sup> Comet Nigerian Newspaper, March 21, 2001, P.12

<sup>21</sup> Factsheet on the Ogoni Struggle <http://www.insular.com/~tmc/politics/africa/ogoni.fact.html>

<sup>22</sup> Torulagha, P.S., “The Niger Delta, Oil and Western Strategic Interests: The Need for Understanding”, <http://unitedijawstates.com>, accessed June 28, 2007

in which over 1000 reportedly lost their lives. It was alleged that Government did not respond immediately to assist those affected, like it would have been done in Western and industrialized countries.<sup>23</sup>

(iv) **Lack of Development and Unemployment:** the Niger Delta region is underdeveloped in all its ramifications, despite the fact that it is the bread basket of Nigeria. Whittington (2001) aptly described the economic dilemma of the region when he stated that “ the oil region in Nigeria seems to be stuck in a time warp, with little real change since oil was discovered 45 years ago. Away from the main towns, there is no real development, no roads, no electricity, no running water and no telephone”.<sup>24</sup> The underdevelopment is so severe, the youth of the region are the hardest hit by lack of development. This is why many of them have resorted to militancy in an effort to focus national and international attention to their plight. Despite all the claims by the oil companies to be involved in the development of the region, it is to the contrary. The pervasive underdevelopment made Whittington to note that, “the government and oil companies have profited by hundreds of billions of dollars since oil was discovered. Yet most Nigerians living in the oil producing region are living in dire poverty”.<sup>25</sup> In an interview with Associated Press, Isah-Aaron gave a gloomy picture of the level of underdevelopment. He said, “Look, here is where we bathe, and also toilet. We are very poor”.<sup>26</sup>

Also, the anger of the people of the region, especially the youth, derives from merely that the other parts of the country, sometimes the arid regions, are built to the standards obtainable in the developed world. They have bridges built over dry land and less travelled roads, while most of the Niger Delta communities are only accessible by boats and seriously in need of bridges. In an interview conducted by Michael Peel of Chatham House, in July 2005, he confirmed the plight of the people of lack bridges to connect them with neighboring communities. In his words, “residents of the community of Soku told me that they had to pay ₦500 (Five Hundred Naira), about 2 Pound Sterling, to go by speed boat to Abonnema, the nearest large town with good road links, or else face hours in a canoe” .<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Whittington, J, in the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News, December, 2001

<sup>25</sup> See: The Francisco Bay, September 17, 2003

<sup>26</sup> Whittington, J, Op Cit

<sup>27</sup> Hutchful, E. 1985. Oil Companies and Environmental Pollution in Nigeria. (In Political Economy of Nigeria, ed Claude Ake, London: Longman Press.



Unemployment is very high among the people of the Niger Delta as the oil companies do not hire their employees from the region that produce oil, but from the non-oil producing region of Nigeria. The situation was aptly described by a leader of a protesting women's group, "our children and our husbands have never been employed by the company (Shell). We want to know why they should continue to be operating here".<sup>28</sup> Also, the issues of underdevelopment and unemployment made members of the Akwa Ibom House of Assembly to launch a protest against Mobil Producing Company in May 2001. Mobil is the largest oil company in that part of Niger Delta with a major facility at Eket. Speaking also on the unemployment level of the youth, Brisibe (2001) said "Majority of the youth from the region are unemployed. They do not benefit from the presence of the Multinational Corporations operating in their communities. Less than five per cent of the people from the Niger Delta work in these companies, women from the region in oil companies are less than one percent . A majority of the beneficiaries are from other parts of Nigeria".<sup>29</sup>

(v) **Distortions in the Social and Economic Fabric of the Local Societies:** the oil companies introduced major distortions into the social and economic fabric of the local societies. According to Hutchful (1985), "Shell and other oil companies have perpetuated regional and class inequalities by creating oil colonies in local areas where oil executives live quite lavishly in comparison to the impoverished conditions of the local communities."<sup>30</sup> Because the oil industry requires highly-skilled workers, local villagers are either forced to migrate to the urban centers after being economically displaced, or to become low-skilled workers dependent on the oil company. These structural changes in the economic life of the local communities has often "generated bitter conflict as the issue of employment and participation in the oil industry has divided different segments of the communities, often along ethnic lines".<sup>31</sup> Other structural effects of the oil industry are "rural depopulation, disintegration of the peasantry, and urban marginalization".<sup>32</sup>

(vi) **Human Rights Violations:** violations of the human rights of the local populace can be cited as one of the factors responsible for the militancy in the Niger Delta region. Oil companies like Chevron, Shell, Agip, Mobil and the other

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Brisibe, A. A. (Op Cit), P.5

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

Western Oil Companies have been very unkind to the people of the region. The human rights of the people are constantly violated by security forces, at the behest of the companies. Perhaps, few examples of military and security activities carried out in the past might help to buttress this assertion. For instance, in attempt to suppress the Isaac Boro rebellion in 1966, Nigerian troops terrorized entire communities including raping of innocent women. Boro was considered to be a threat to the free exploitation of the petroleum resources in the Niger Delta.<sup>33</sup> In 1987, the Iko Community in Akwa Ibom State was extensively brutalized by a team of Nigerian Mobile Police Force, at the request of Shell.<sup>34</sup> In 1992, at the insistent of Shell, some youth were killed in Bonny during a peaceful demonstration against the activities of the oil company.<sup>35</sup> In January 1993, the crisis over environmental pollution and economic marginalization from the oil industry reached its peak when 300,000 Ogoni protested against Shell Oil. This organized protest was followed by repeated harassment, arrests, and killing of Ogonis by the Federal government troops.<sup>36</sup> On January 11, 1999, Ijaw women who were engaged in a peaceful demonstration and marginalization of their people in Port Harcourt were violently tear-gassed, beaten, stripped, and detained by a combined team of policemen and soldiers. Also, the Warri wars of 2003 was allegedly instigated by the activities of some oil companies and Nigerian Naval officers.<sup>37</sup> The people of the region viewed all these as assaults and marginalization because they belonged to ethnic minority groups in the Nigerian Federation.

(vii) **Bad Governance/Corruption:** the Niger Delta region is riddled with bad governance/corruption on the parts of government officials, both at the state and local government levels. It has been argued that if government officials in the region have utilized judiciously their monthly allocations, to better the lots of the ordinary people, through the creation of jobs, and embark on infrastructural development of the region, the situation would have been better than this current sorry state. Rather, the jumbo monthly allocations are spent on frivolous things that have no corresponding bearings on the life of the people. The case of Rivers State during the

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<sup>33</sup> ICE Case Study: Ogonis and Conflict, op cit. P.5

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Brisibe, A. A. (Op Cit), P.5

<sup>36</sup> International Herald Tribune: Oil Companies in Niger Delta Facing Growing List of Dangers Retrieved from <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/04/22/news/oil.php>

<sup>37</sup> Brisibe, A. A. (Op. Cit), P.6

immediate past government of Dr. Peter Odili would lay credence to this assertion. The Rivers State government, for example, had a budget of \$1.3 billion in 2006. It includes transportation fees of \$65,000 a day for the governor's office; \$10 million for catering, gifts and souvenirs; \$38 million for two helicopters. Health services received \$22 million.<sup>38</sup> Disturbed by the wastefulness of some States and Local Governments especially those in the oil region, the then Minister of State Finance, who later became the substantive Minister, Esther Nenadi Usman, asked for greater scrutiny of the activities of governors, particularly those receiving huge sum from derivation each month. In her words, "States have been a source of worry to us, lately. If you look at the way money is shared at the Federal Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC) meeting, Federal Government gets about 48 per cent, while State and Local Governments take the remaining 52 per cent..... Three to four days after the FAAC meeting, exchange rate rates jump up, which means they are using them to buy foreign exchange. If you look at the States, the States that get so much, you can hardly see anything to show for it".<sup>39</sup> Continuing, she said " make telephone calls to any of the States and ask after the governor and you will be told that he has gone abroad. Not Only the governors, even the commissioner for finance".<sup>40</sup> The Head of the Nigerian Anti-Corruption Agency, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, estimated that in 2003, 70 per cent of oil revenues, more than \$14 billion was stolen or wasted.<sup>37</sup> A case in point is that of the former Governor of the oil rich Bayelsa State, DSP Alameiyesegeha, who stashed hundred of millions of dollars in foreign bank accounts to buy mansions in the United States and send his children to private schools in London.<sup>41</sup> Seeing money coming from the Federal Government, on earnings on crude oil sales, with essentially none of it reaching the ordinary people, has created condition for insurrection. Confirming why the militants were fighting against the system and bad governance to Jeff Koinage of CNN, a leader of the foremost militant group operating in the region, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), General God's Will said, "we are in the middle of a struggle for the liberation of the Niger Delta, the most devastated and the most

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<sup>38</sup> Usman, N. E. "Governors Waste Monthly Allocations" in Corruption in High Places, <http://www.unitedijawstates.com> (accessed July 01, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> See Nigerian Oil, Curse of the Black Gold in <http://www7.nationalgeographic.com> (accessed July 01, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

threatened region in the world”.<sup>42</sup> The former President, Olusegun Obasanjo, also decried the situation in the Niger Delta despite the 13 per cent of revenues from onshore and offshore oil fields without much impacts on the ordinary people. In his words, “ so far not much impact has been made on the lives and living standards of most ordinary people of the Niger Delta”.<sup>43</sup>

**Divide and Rule Tactics of Oil Companies:** one of the reasons that has been adduced to be responsible for the Niger Delta crisis is the divide and rule tactics of some of oil giant firms operating in the area. The oil companies rather than involve themselves in the development of their areas of operation prefers to give financial gains to some vocal local chiefs which usually result in crisis. For instance, the crisis that occurred in Rumuolemeni, Rivers State on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2007 was attributed to sharing of booties from oil companies in the area.<sup>44</sup> Those who are not favoured in the largesse usually cause confusion by attacking the oil firms until their demands are met.

(ix) **Alleged insincerity of the Federal Government:** another factor that has been attributed to be one of the reasons responsible for the crisis, is the alleged insincerity of the Federal Government of Nigeria to fully develop the region in partnership with the state governments. Commission like Oil Minerals Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC), created by the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, for the development of the area did not achieve its aims due to poor funding on the part of the Federal Government, in spite of the huge dollars made from the area from crude oil. This gradually led to some leaders in the region to begin agitation for resource control. The government of Obasanjo equally set up another agency, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDC), to bring development to the doorsteps of the people, but the operation of the Commission is being hampered by lack of money to carry out its mandates, and it became a serious obstacle in pursuing the goal of developing the region. According to Akanna Campbell, Executive Secretary, South-South Community Development Union (SSCDU), a Niger

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<sup>42</sup> CNN.Com “ Nigerian Kidnappers Release Hostages”, February 13, 2007, (accessed July 01, 2007)

<sup>43</sup> Thisday Newspaper “ Cultists Behead Paramount Ruler in Ogoni ”, in <http://www.thisdayonline.com>, (accessed July 01, 2007)

<sup>44</sup> Olusegun Obasanjo, “Let Us Build Nigeria Together” ,radio speech marking 44<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary, October, 2004, [http:// www.nigeria.gov.ng](http://www.nigeria.gov.ng) (accessed July 10, 2007)

Delta research group, the insincerity of the Federal government made the people want to confront the issue in a militant way. In his words, “ the situation forced many indigenes to begin feel frustrated that another hope and promise has gone down the drain. It marked the beginning of hydra-headed issue of kidnapping of oil workers. The people, particularly the youth, in their own judgement, now felt that the best way to react was by disturbing the flow of oil. They were of the view that since Abuja would not fulfill its pledges, they too would cripple the source through which oil money flow to the seat of power.”<sup>45</sup>

### **PART III**

#### **Impact of the Crisis**

As stated in the preceding chapter, the crisis in the Niger Delta region through the activities of the different militant groups operating there, have brought about some negative impacts on oil and economic activities, and on governance in general. The sense of relentless crisis has deepened since last year when the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and other groups intensified attacks on oil platforms and pumping stations, attacked and killed soldiers, kidnapped foreign oil workers, set off car bombs. A kind of insecurity has been created in the minds of people, thus bringing about some negative impacts with it. What are these impacts?

#### **Economic Impact**

This would be viewed from different perspectives: government, oil companies/corporate bodies and individuals.

##### **(i) Government:**

The government of Nigeria relies solely on the earnings derived from the sales of oil to be able to carry its obligations. The crisis which began since December 2005 has at times forced oil production shutdowns of up to 800,000 barrels per day<sup>46</sup>, threatening Nigerian government plans to nearly double production to four million barrels a day by 2010. The crisis is said to have cost

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<sup>45</sup> The Guardian Newspaper “Niger Delta: Government Must Dump Past Deceptive Tactics”, <http://www.guardiannewsngr.com>, accessed July 06, 2007

<sup>46</sup> International Crisis Group, Africa Briefing No. 115, “The Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria’s Delta Unrest”, August 3, 2006

the country an annual loss of 4.4 billion dollars (3.2 billion euros)<sup>47</sup>. The campaign of the foremost militant group, MEND, has heightened tension in the area and is threatening to cripple Nigeria's crude oil export. Experts predict that if the violence continues, oil companies operating in the area will be forced to leave, sending Nigeria's economy in to a nose dive. Should it happen and it is beginning to look possible with increased kidnappings and pipeline bombings in the area, MEND, would have succeeded in their campaign to bring Nigeria's oil dependent to its knees. Already, a quarter of Nigeria's oil output in the estimation of International Herald Tribune has been shut down leading to huge loss of earnings to the government.<sup>48</sup>

(ii) **International Supply of Crude Oil:**

The Niger Delta crisis since it began has rippled across energy markets, contributing to higher prices and tighter supplies. Attacks on oil platforms in the region usually push oil prices up. According to a report by International Herald Tribune, an attack by gunmen on a boat carrying oil workers to an offshore rig in the delta on Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2007, pushed up oil prices by more than \$1.50, to \$63.38 a barrel.<sup>49</sup>

(iii) **Downsizing of oil Companies Employees:**

As the crisis in the Niger Delta is hampering operations of the oil companies, some of them have started laying off their workers. Anglo/Dutch oil firm, Shell Development Company, is set to retrench 3,500 workers before September 2007.<sup>50</sup> A similar action was taken in 2004 when about 1,500 Shell workers were retrenched. The idea was conceived in order to reduce operational costs, in view of the worsening security situation in the Niger Delta region. The management of Shell opted for the measure in response to the cut in production, especially in the Western operation in Bayelsa and Delta States since February 2006. A production shut in over 500,000 barrels of crude oil per day is being recorded in the Western operation since fresh crisis erupted in the Niger Delta in February 2006.

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<sup>47</sup> Yahoo News, "Kidnappers Release Law Maker's Son in Southern Nigeria" June 30, 2006

<sup>48</sup> International Herald Tribune: Oil Companies In Niger Delta Face Growing List of Dangers, June 06, 2007, P.1

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Punch Newspaper (Nigeria), Niger Delta Crisis: Shell To Sack 3,500, Sunday, June10, 2007,P.14

(iv) **Lull in Business Activities:**

Since the start of the crisis, particularly hostage taking and attack on oil installations in the Niger Delta, there has been dearth of business activities. Restiveness has reduced growth in the business sector in the past three years. In Rivers State alone, the situation has assumed a worrisome dimension to the extent that about 80 per cent of companies in the state have stopped operations as expatriates have either gone to their countries or have taken cover in other areas. This development, has in turned, increased the unemployment ratio among the youth. The Deputy Governor of Rivers State, Engr. Tele Ikuru, said of the situation “Rivers State has become a carcass of itself; go to Trans-Amadi and you will see that about 80 per cent of companies have closed down, not because of their inability to manage businesses properly, but because of the demonic activities of our youth”.<sup>51</sup> He specifically mentioned that Indorama Petrol Chemicals has shut down operations thereby rendering over 3,000 youth jobless and aggravating the unemployment situation.<sup>52</sup>

(v) **Disruption of Telecommunication Activities:**

The Niger Delta crisis has impacted negatively the Telecommunication Sector, as militant activities have compounded the problems of drop calls in the networks of mobile operators in the country (Nigeria) as several base stations have become inaccessible in the region. Confirming the development, the General Manager, Regulatory Affairs, Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN) Nigeria, Mr. Wale Goodluck, said “the company had 43 base stations shut down in the Delta region due to militant activities that made them inaccessible”.<sup>53</sup> He said with the situation operators are unable to refuel base stations when their power runs low. This has brought about significant level of drop calls.<sup>54</sup>

(vi) **Losses to the Region:**

Besides the trillions of naira that have been lost by the country due to the crisis, the Niger Delta States are suffering as a result of the lingering problem. All the States of the region have been failing in their oil production quota and that means lower 13 per cent derivation fund. One of the new governors cried out recently that it was as if his state was no longer oil producing. The oil companies are on tenterhooks, as their

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<sup>51</sup> Sunday Trust Newspaper, “How Asari Dokubo Plans To Tackle Hostage Taking”, <http://dailytrust.com>, accessed July 7, 2007

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Punch Newspaper, “GSM Calls: Militants Compound Operators’ Woes”, <http://www.punchng.com>, accessed July 01, 2007

<sup>54</sup> Punch Newspaper, Ibid



operations were being carried out in fits and starts and the environment is not safe for business.<sup>55</sup>

Construction works on the very important East-West Road, which the people of the region had been complaining of for a very long time has been abandoned by Setraco, the construction firm handling the job, after some of its expatriate workers were kidnapped by militants. For more than a year, Shell had not produced oil in its western operation area due to the damage of its facilities in the creeks. Some companies have relocated from Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa states following the rising cases of banditry by militants.<sup>56</sup>

### **Security Implication of the Crisis**

The crisis has brought about serious security implication for the country. This is manifested in the various ways:

#### **(i) Confrontations with the Military:**

The Nigerian Military, under the aegis of the Joint Military Task Force (JTF), have been fighting with the militants since 2006 when the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) started its violent activities. MEND and other militia groups have been able to withstand the military in several clashes they have had. They have been able to do this because of their access to sophisticated weapons which they use in attacking oil platforms and facilities. According to a security expert, the type of weapons available to the different militia groups in the Delta area are so overwhelming, that something should be done, to arrest the situation, before it turns to a high level civil war. She further said that Nigeria security is being undermined by the militia groups, for the military to have not been able to tame them. In her words, “the militants appear to be operating with almost impunity. To make matters worse, the militant’s tactics and weaponry are increasingly sophisticated.”<sup>57</sup>

#### **(ii) Kidnapping and Hostage Taking:**

Kidnapping and hostage taking has become the order of the day with oil workers and individuals becoming the targets, thus worsening the security situation. Precisely on <sup>58</sup>January 11, 2006, hostage taking of oil workers started in Bayelsa state after the declaration of ‘Operation Orido Danger’ by MEND with the kidnapping of four set of

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<sup>55</sup> Emma Amaize, “Niger Delta Commercial Hostage Takers Uncovered”, <http://www.vanguardngr.com>, accessed July 15, 2007

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

<sup>57</sup> Theresa Whelan, “U.S. Partners With Nigeria on Security for Oil-Rich Delta Region”, USINFO.STATE.GOV, accessed from, <http://usinfo.state.gov/utills/printpage.html>, June 09, 2007

<sup>58</sup> Emma Amaize, “Niger Delta Commercial Hostage Takers Uncovered”, <http://www.vanguardngr.com> accessed July 15, 2007

hostages namely: Mikko Nichevi (Bulgarian), Harry Ebanks (Honduras), Arnold Laundry (American) and Nigel Watson Clark (Briton). About 200 expatriate had been kidnapped since the commencement of the ugly incidence, although most have been released within weeks in exchange for ransoms, typically hundreds of thousands of dollars. According to the International Herald Tribune “Oil companies find themselves in an uneasy position, stuck in a crisis that they, in a sense, helped create. For years, human rights groups accused them of turning a blind eye to the corruption of Nigeria’s successive military regimes while damaging the environment in the delta”.<sup>59</sup> Besides expatriates, individuals have been kidnapped by militants for ransoms. Mrs. Cecilia Omehia, the octogenarian mother of Mr. Celestine Omehia, Governor of Rivers State, then Governor-Elect, was kidnapped on May 01, 2007. Recently, the militants have become more daring and have targeted toddlers. Young Michael Steward, son to a member of the Rivers State House of Assembly; three year old British toddler, Margaret Hill; and Samuel Amadi, the two year old son of the Eze of Iriebe Kingdom, Dr. Francis Amadi, have swelled the ranks of those taken hostage by the militants.<sup>60</sup>

As a result of the prevailing insecurity in the Niger Delta, expatriates have been abandoning their work. For Instance, expatriates handling the training programme of the new recruits of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, in Effurun, Delta State, abandoned the scheme. The expatriates, numbering six, fled the conference centre of the Petroleum Training Institute, PTI, venue of the training session, following a report that some militants were mobilizing to abduct them<sup>61</sup> The action might truncate the vision of the management of the NNPC in conceiving the scheme to re-orientate and inculcate fresh values in the new employees.

Every Nigerian and International Community are greatly disturbed by the insalubrious development. This made Simeon Kolawole to observe in his writing in the Thisday Newspaper that, “Kidnapping expatriates and toddlers may just be a child’s play. Something more barbaric may be in the offing if we do not find a solution as soon as possible”<sup>62</sup>

(iii) **Illegal Bunkering Activities:**

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<sup>59</sup> International Herald Tribune, “Oil Companies in Niger Delta Face Growing List of Dangers”, Op. Cit

<sup>60</sup> Saturday Punch, “Kidnapping Has Become The Order of the Day”, <http://www.punchng.com>, accessed July 15, 2007

<sup>61</sup> Punch Newspaper, “Expatriates Abandon Scheme”, <http://www.punchng.com>, accessed July 13, 2007

<sup>62</sup> Simeon Kolawole, “Kidnapping Is A Child’s Play”, <http://www.thisdayonline.com>, accessed July 15, 2007

The crisis has made illegal bunkering of oil to thrive, which is also the source of funds for the militants operating in the creeks of Niger Delta. According to a report of the Brussels based International Crisis Group, Nigeria losses anywhere from 70,000 to 300,000 barrels per day to illegal bunkering,<sup>63</sup> the equivalent output of a small oil producing country. In its annual report in late August 2006, Shell Nigeria estimated illegal bunkering losses at 20,000 to 40,000 barrels per day in 2005, down from 40,000 to 60,000 in 2004.<sup>64</sup> The Washington based Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force calculated that a loss of just 70,000 barrels a day at a price of \$60 a barrel “would generate over \$1.5 billion per year-ample resources to fund arms trafficking, buy political influence, or both”.<sup>65</sup> Put another way, “one day’s worth of illegal oil bunkering in the Niger Delta (at 100,000 barrels and \$15bbl) will buy quality weapons for and sustain a group of 1,500 youths for two months”<sup>66</sup>, according to a report by a consultancy group contracted to shell.

Illegal bunkering has been a key source of funds for anti-government militant groups. Several militant warlords have either publicly or privately admitted involvement and others said they consider the practice a defensible means of providing income for aggrieved and impoverished residents of oil producing communities.<sup>67</sup> However, it must be noted that the activities of these bunkerers have become a serious threat to the security well being of the Nigerian nation.

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In view of the dire consequences brought about by the crisis, concerted efforts should be made, both within and outside, towards resolving the crisis in order to save Nigeria from another conflict, which aftermath, will be too much for the world to handle.

Suggested solutions towards resolving the crisis is the focus of the next part.

## **PART IV**

### **Recommendations and the way forward**

The crisis in the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria has of recent gotten international attention. The reason is because of the strategic importance of the region to the global supply of oil and energy. Anytime friction occurs in the region, the world catches cold, as oil prices always shoots up. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Country (OPEC) of recent gave the reason why oil prices hit an 11 month pinnacle of \$76.08 a barrel in the international oil market. OPEC said

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<sup>63</sup> International Crisis Group, “Fuelling The Niger Delta Crisis”, Crisis Group Africa Report No. 118, 28 September, 2006, P.8

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

supply concerns was due to militant attacks and outages in Nigeria, with its resultant effect, which bolstered oil prices.<sup>67</sup> Corroborating OPEC's explanation, the International Energy Agency (IEA), Deputy Executive Director, William Ramsay said " It is driven up by supply anxieties. It is driven up by Nigeria....."<sup>68</sup>

In view of the strategic importance of the region to the world's supply of crude oil and energy, and coupled with the fact that, the crisis, if not checked, could have serious debilitating effects on Nigeria and the stability of the West African Sub-region, there is the need for its swift resolution. What the situation in the region needs now according to Komolafe "Is a fundamental approach to solving problems. The time is ripe to think of efficacious solutions instead of merely playing politics with the people's misery".<sup>69</sup> The recommended solutions are categorized into three, viz: Nigerian Government, Oil Companies and the International Community.

### **Nigerian Government**

(i) Upward review of the derivation accruable to oil producing states: the people of the Niger Delta have long being agitating for upward review of derivation paid to oil producing states from the present 13 per cent to not less than 50 per cent to enable them tackle the myriads of problems confronting them, as a result of oil exploration activities. They argued that there was precedence, pointing out that 50 per cent of revenues from oil and minerals were officially allocated to areas from which those resources were derived during Nigeria's First Republic- 1960-1966. However, as Nigeria's oil industry boomed and the government increasingly relied on oil income from the Delta region, the subsequent military administrators reduced derivation payments to 45 per cent in 1970, 20 per cent in 1975 and by the time then military ruler of General Olusegun Obasanjo handed over power in 1979, the derivation principle had been abolished. In 1982, under President Shehu Shagari, 1.5 per cent was allocated directly to oil producing states. In the final part of the Babangida administration in 1992, the share of revenues specifically allocated to oil producing states was doubled to 3 per cent. Arising from the recommendations of a 1995 constitution review conference, derivation payments were increased to 13 per cent, where they currently stand.<sup>70</sup>

The report of a Special Committee on Oil Producing Areas set up by the Federal Government and chaired by a former Chief of Defence Staff, General Alexander Ogomudia, with membership which included the Managing Director of the national oil company, the Nigerian National

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<sup>67</sup> Abdulla Isalem El-Badri, OPEC Secretary General, "Why Oil Prices Are Rising", <http://www.ngrguardiannews.com>, accessed July 12, 2007

<sup>68</sup> William Ramsay, IEA Executive Director, Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Kayode Komolafe, " A Fesh Look At The Niger Delta?", <http://www.thisdayonline.com>, accessed June 06, 2007

<sup>70</sup> International Crisis Group, "Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis", Op. Cit, P.12

Petroleum Company (NNPC), and his counterparts from the subsidiaries of five major foreign oil companies-Shell, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Total and Eni (Agip) made some far reaching recommendations to the government. The committee recommended the immediate “upward review of the minimum thirteen per cent derivation to not less than 50 per cent”.<sup>71</sup> It also called for the repeal of legislation including the 1978 Land Use Act, and Petroleum Act of 1969-laws which the committee said “dispossess oil producing of their land”.<sup>72</sup>

The Federal Government of Nigeria has consistently rejected the region’s resource control demands. At the National Political Reforms Conference in July 2005, Niger Delta delegates asked that the federal government increase derivation payments to 25-50 per cent of revenues, an offer that was countered by an unofficial offer of 17 per cent. Niger Delta delegates left the conference in anger after a group of influential northern leaders-the Arewa Consultative Forum, derided the 17 per cent offer as an “excessive generosity”.<sup>73</sup>

So far government has not acquiesced to the request and many activists and opinion leaders from the region have hinged the resolution of the crisis to the implementation of the recommendations of General Ogomudia’s committee. According to a royal father in Delta State, Pere of Seimbiri Kingdom, Charles Ayemi-Botu, one of the ways in resolving the crisis is “increase the principle of derivation from its present 13 per cent to 25 per cent within 5 years as being practiced in true fiscal federalism throughout the world”.<sup>74</sup> A prominent member of MEND in response to a question on what could be the solution said, “the cause of the Niger Delta’s problems is widely known by government. Implement the Ogomudia report and we are on our way to solving it”.<sup>75</sup> The increase in the derivation principle in respect of revenue from oil will help in no small way in resolving the crisis.

(ii) Introduction of the Alaska Model through Direct Distribution of Revenue to the people: In light of the people’s complaint that oil to them is a curse, since they have had no any direct benefit from it. Arising from this thinking, it is necessary for government to introduce a more radical approach whereby revenue would be distributed directly to the population rather than being held by government. This approach being suggested is used in Alaska, USA, where one-half of oil royalties is channeled into the Alaska Permanent Fund, and one half of the fund’s investment earning is distributed to the state’s residents in the form of annual checks.<sup>76</sup> The

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> The Petroleum Act in Nigeria vests all ownership and control of all petroleum in the State, which has sole control over exploration and production licenses.

<sup>73</sup> Emma Amaize, “Resource Control: Anger Everywhere”, Vanguard, July 3, 2005

<sup>74</sup> Charles Ayemi-Botu, “Resolving the Niger Delta Crisis”, Punch, June 11, 2007

<sup>75</sup> International Crisis Group, “Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis”, Op. Cit, P.14

<sup>76</sup> Jill Shackleman, Op. Cit, P.46

objective of the Alaska scheme is to give citizens a stake in the development of the industry, while also saving a share for future generations.

This scheme was recommended for implementation in Nigeria when Xavier Salai-i-Marta and Arvind Subramanian argued in a 2003 International Monetary Fund (IMF) working paper that in order to address the natural resource curse in Nigeria, “ .....Oil revenues be distributed equally to the people, with each Nigerian worldwide greenhouse gas.<sup>91</sup> Effort by Nigerian government to end gas flaring by oil companies, through legislation, has not yielded the desired result. There was a or adult Nigerian having a right to an equal share in the proceeds ”.<sup>77</sup>

There is no gain denying the fact that implementing the Alaska model in Nigeria whereby every citizen, most especially the Niger Deltans, will a have feel of the oil revenue, thereby assisting in no small measure in resolving the Niger Delta crisis, and stem some vices like oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism. The people themselves will protect oil facilities, because it would be viewed as theirs.

(iii) Transparency in Oil Revenue: another solution being prescribed is making accurate information publicly available about extractive industry revenue paid to government as framed in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). This is to curb corruption and bring about confidence in the act of governance business. In their mid-2004 Summit, the Group of Eight Industrialized Nations (G8) launched the First Transparency Compacts, Voluntary Partnerships in which a developing country government sets out a plan to bring greater transparency and accountability to the management of public resources, with the G8 governments providing technical assistance and political support.<sup>78</sup>

Nigeria has gone ahead to sign up to the British-backed Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) by establishing her own Nigeria Extractive Transparency Initiative (NEITI) in 2003.<sup>79</sup> NEITI has, however, taken important first steps in revealing serious shortcomings in the country's system of accounting for revenues from the oil and gas industries since-mid -2005. This step will further enhance accountability and transparency in the oil an gas industries in Nigeria.

(iv) Instituting Internal Mechanisms at the State and Local Government Levels to Curb Corruption: The Federal Government should step up the war on corruption and make it more effective, especially in the Niger Delta region, where the states and local governments receive 13 per cent derivation. It is not a matter of secret that funds earmarked for development purposes are either embezzled or mis-applied in most states of the Niger Delta. A former Special Adviser in

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<sup>77</sup> Xavier Salai-i-Marta and Arvind Subramanian, “Addressing The Natural Resource Curse: An Illustration From Nigeria”, IMF Working Paper No. 03/139,25, Washington, DC, 2003

<sup>78</sup> Sea Island Summit Documents, “ Fighting Corruption and Improving Transparency”, June 10, 2004, accessed from <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/sammt/2004seaisland/index.html>

<sup>79</sup> International Crisis Group, “Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis”, Op. Cit, P.17

the administration of Obasanjo on Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Professor Julius Ihonvbere lamented the situation whereby the Niger Delta governors (1999-2007) did not manage the resources that accrued to them for the overall benefit of the people of their states. In his words, “ If you go to the Niger Delta, some states that collected over N600 billion (about 34 billion euro) since 1999, have nothing to show for the huge money” .<sup>80</sup> He therefore called on the new administrations in the states of the Niger Delta to put in structures at the local government levels if the problem of militancy in the region and abject poverty must be resolved.<sup>81</sup>

It was on the basis of corruption and mis-application of funds that President Yar’Adua had to advise governors in the Niger Delta States to be honest in handling funds allocated to their states. He said that an honest and transparent deployment of state funds would greatly enhance the expected effect of the Niger Delta Master Plan on the lives of the people in the area. In his words, “ If the people can see that their leaders are honest, they will understand, but once they see that their leaders are in power to make money, then there will be a problem. We must begin to build trust in the people”.<sup>82</sup> The Federal Government should ensure that what happened between 1999-2007 does not happen again.

(v) Implementation of Developmental Programmes: the Niger Delta region has been described as a sorry tale of woes with about 70 per cent of the people living below the poverty line; health care delivery poor, with the region’s 20 per cent mortality rate amongst the highest in the world; the industrial level development level is very low; unemployment high; transportation system inadequate with movement and access to settlements being hampered by a road network and difficult conditions, especially in the rural areas; absence of electricity supply in many rural areas and regularly interrupted supply access to all areas; poor telecommunication network; inadequate education facilities; and ineffective waste management and inadequate sanitation facilities.<sup>83</sup>

To arrest the situation described above, there is the need for government, through the established Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), to tackle the problem of underdevelopment of the region in a holistic manner through the envisioned Niger Delta Regional Master Plan. Previous intervention agencies like Oil Minerals Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) could not perform their expected intervening programmes for lack of proper funding and support by the government. The government of President Umar Yar’Adua has to do is to complement its welcome initiatives in the Niger Delta region with a view that the

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<sup>80</sup> Julius Ihonvbere, “ Leadership Has Failed in Niger Delta”, Vanguard Newspaper, 12 July, 2007

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> President Umar Musa Yar’Adua, “Niger Delta Master Plan: Yar’Adua Demands Honesty From Governors”, The Punch Newspaper, July 05, 2007.

<sup>83</sup> Jide Ajani, “Restiveness in the Niger Delta: The Long Term Role of NDDC”, Vanguard, July 20, 2007



NDDC gets its needed funding for it to be able to carry out to the fullest the development of the region through the Niger Delta Regional Master Plan.

The implementation of the regional master plan has the potentials to turn the fortunes of the people of the region around as it would address the problem of under-development and halt agitation by the people. This assertion is corroborated by the view of an opinion leader in the region, Chief Super Digifa Paris. He said for peace to reign, he advised “governments to make live more comfortable for the people by providing electricity, portable water, good roads, good education and water systems, effective and efficient health care for the citizenry as well as create sustainable jobs for the teeming population.”<sup>84</sup> Continuing, he said “the money is there, but these things are not done. How much will it cost the government to provide all these social amenities compared to the huge amount the country makes”.<sup>85</sup>

(vi) Dialogue: The Federal Government of Nigeria should go in to dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders with a view to resolving the crisis. Dialogue has been recognized by eminent people as a way of resolving the crisis. According to Emmanuel Onwubiko, member, Governing Board of the Nigeria’s National Human Rights Commission, the Federal Government of Nigeria should use dialogue to resolve the crisis. He noted that “since the military approach adopted by past administrations could not yield the desired result, it is only dialogue that can resolve it”.<sup>86</sup> Another supporter of the idea of dialogue is Tai Ejibunu. He (Ejibunu) urged the Government to adopt dialogue using the Non-Violent Communication (NVC) approach developed by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg. In an article written in one of the national dailies in Nigeria, he said “ Government should use the NVC approach to organize seminars, to be anchored by NVC experts, with all the relevant stakeholders in attendance..... Doing so, the government would have fulfilled the four components of NVC which encourage us to focus on what we and others are observing; how and why we are feeling as we do; what are our underlying needs are; and what each of us would like”.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, a leading leader of the Supreme Egbesu Assembly, one of the groups fighting the government for the control of the Niger Delta resources, Sergeant Werinipe Digifa, had proposed a meeting which is akin to the NVC, where all the stakeholders from the various ethnic nationalities of the region will discuss the various position papers they had developed in the past.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Super Digifa Paris, “Niger Delta: Between Violence and Peace Move”, Daily Trust, July 12, 2007

<sup>85</sup> Ibid Tai Ejibunu “ Resolving the Niger Delta Crisis”, Punch Newspaper, July 25, 2007, P.13

<sup>86</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, P.14

## Oil Companies

It is an under statement to say the fact that multi-national oil companies operating in the Niger Delta have roles to play in resolving the crisis. Their activities have been cited as some of the factors that brought about the crisis. The expected roles of the oil companies are discussed below.

(vii) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): according to Shankleman (2006),<sup>89</sup> social responsibility approaches found in the oil industry have three substantive components. The first is based on systems to avoid creating negative social impacts, while contributing positively to the communities and societies they operate. This involves doing impact assessments of new projects, consulting with neighbouring communities and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in order to understand what the unintended impacts of investment might be and how these can be avoided, and financing community projects chosen to reflect community needs and priorities. These assessments can involve making sure that people from oil areas benefit from employment and business opportunities, often through elaborate training, hiring, and business development programmes, because a consistent finding from all community consultations is that people want jobs as compensations for the changes introduced by oil industry development. The people of Niger Delta have

often argued that they are left out of employment opportunities in the oil industry. As part of corporate social responsibility, oil companies should be made to reserve certain percentage of employable personnel from the communities they are operating. A communiqué issued at the end of a conference held in Rotterdam, The Netherlands canvassed this position when it urged the multi-national corporations domiciled in Nigeria's Niger Delta "to provide employment and economic empowerment to the people of the region especially for the youth and women at the rural areas to douse not only the prevalent restiveness but rural-urban drift".<sup>90</sup> This will undoubtedly give the people a sense of belonging and create a kind of special relationship between them and the oil companies.

The second key element of CSR approaches in the oil industry, according to Shankleman, is involvement in "tri-sectoral" partnerships, made up of oil companies, governments, and NGOs, to develop and implement voluntary systems that address specific issues.<sup>91</sup> The first such initiative in the oil industry was the December 2000 voluntary principles on Security and Human Rights,

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<sup>89</sup> Jill Shackleman, "Oil Profits and Peace: Does Business Have A Role in Peacemaking", United States Institute of Peace, 2006, P.60

<sup>90</sup> Communiqué issued at the end of an International Conference on Curbing Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta held, April 29, 2006, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, <http://www.onlinenigeria.com/articles/ad.asp?blurb=266>, accessed June 09, 2007

<sup>91</sup> Jill Shackleman, Op. Cit, P.60

negotiated by the U.S. and UK governments, six major extractive industry corporations, and set of International NGOs.<sup>92</sup> This approach could also be introduced in Nigeria. With such approach coming in place, it will be highly difficult for the oil multinational companies to short change the oil communities, and not be alive to their corporate responsibility to the community.

The final element of CSR in the oil industry is for companies to become explicitly involved, as a matter of enlightened self-interest in collaborating with governments, businesses, and NGOs in activities aimed at preventing the “curse of oil” and ensuring that oil booms result in economic and social development.<sup>93</sup> This approach,

promoted by some NGOs, is reflected in efforts to encourage revenue management programmes, large-scale and development oriented social investment programmes (targeted at super majors), projects to provide access to energy for people in hydro-

carbon exporting countries and projects such as International Business Leaders Forum action plan for businesses in support of the Millennium Development Goals, which, for example, encourages business to get involved in promoting international trade reform.

The Corporate Social Responsibility approach, if implemented fully and expertly to the management of oil projects, have the potential to significantly reduce the risks of local dissatisfaction exacerbating or triggering local conflicts, as the case in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

(viii) Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs): Effective resolution of the Niger Delta conflict is clearly interdependent with environmental care and sustainability, and any efforts made to solve the Niger Delta crisis, must give consideration to post-conflict economic development that does not repeat the paradigm of environmental and ecological development. This point is necessary because up to the late 1990s, little attention was paid to the impacts of oil and gas developments on people and communities, thus bringing frictions between communities and oil companies.

In view of that, it is highly recommended that oil companies going to oil exploratory business, must first have concluded detailed research on environmental and social impact assessments, in an effort to understand the social and economic fabric of the neighbourhoods where oil wells and pipelines are to be built, as well as extensive consultation with community members, so that people have advance knowledge of the developments, and the opportunity to express their concerns and interests.

The underlying aim of an ESIA is to develop new oil and gas fields in a way that avoids causing social damage and disruption, provides tangible benefits to the local population, and reduces

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, P.61

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

business risks from social and environmental factors. This is a standard that is required in Europe and the United States.

(ix) **Elimination of Gas Flaring:** Gas flaring by oil companies has done a lot of havoc on the people and the environment. It has destroyed the ecosystem and the people means of livelihood. By the World Bank records, gas flaring in Niger Delta has resulted in 70million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions a year, a substantial proportion of worldwide greenhouse gas.<sup>94</sup> Effort by Nigerian government to end gas flaring by oil companies, through legislation, has not yielded the desired result. There was a proposal to eliminate gas flaring in 2004, but when the oil companies objected, insisting that it would cost too much to acquire the technology necessary to comply with the deadline, government extended the deadline for total elimination of gas flaring to 2008.

From all indications, the oil companies are being economical with the truth over the gas flaring issue. In Europe and America, gas flaring has been eliminated. Why is it different in Nigeria? It is, therefore, recommended that the directive that gas flaring should stop in 2008 in Nigeria should hold.

### **International Community**

International Community has a role to play in dousing the tension in the Niger Delta and thus bring about amicable solution to the crisis. The international community in this case includes home governments of the oil companies involved in oil business in Nigeria and international organizations. The role of outside help was stressed by a United States expert on Nigeria, Benjamin Akande, when he told the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News that “the truth of the matter is that Nigeria may need outside help to deal with this situation. The U.S., the European Union, or the African Union could come into this conversation and help resolve this issue”.<sup>95</sup> The expected recommendations of the international community is discussed below.

### **Western Nations with Major Oil Interests in Nigeria:**

This being the case, it is imperative that Western nations pursue the following goals, options, actions:

(x) Pay more attention to the issues affecting the Niger Delta. It is no longer sufficient for them to

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<sup>94</sup> International Crisis Group, “Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis”, Report No. 118, 28 September, 2006, P.21

<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Akande on British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News, Wednesday, May 30, 2007, accessed June 26, 2007

deal with the region solely through the Nigerian government. The federal government has failed repeatedly to live up to its responsibilities.

(xi) Recognize the fact that the multinational companies are sources of conflict and the Western governments have a moral responsibility to supervise their conduct, even though they are private businesses.

(xii) Become proactively engaged in compelling the multinational oil companies to change their corruptible, exploitative, destabilizing, intimidating, brutalizing, and destructive business practices.

(xiii) Use their diplomatic and economic leverage to persuade Nigerian power-wielders to become politically engaged without using military means to solve problems in the Niger Delta.

(xiv) Persuade the oil companies to institute an affirmative action plan. The plan should include the following requirements: (a) that a certain percentage of their workforce come directly from the region, (b) that a certain percentage of their incomes must be reinvested in the region through infrastructural and institutional development, (c) the provision of skill-building educational and training programs, medical facilities, and community development, (d) payment of a certain percentage of land rights directly to the communities in which they explore for oil and gas and (e) a proactive community relations program.

(xv) The US, Britain, Holland, France, Italy etc. should treat the Niger Delta as a Special Development Region and thereby institute development assistance programs. In other words, agencies like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) should institute International Development Partnership (IDP) programs to facilitate development of the region. The USAID can work with the American oil companies and non-governmental bodies in Nigeria to devise developmental strategies for the region. Britain, France, Holland etc. should also create their own assistance programs. This is intended to stabilize the region so that mutually rewarding relationships can be established between the people and the oil companies, as well as between the people and the Western nations.

(xvi) The US should encourage the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish cooperative partnerships with Nigeria, the Niger Delta States, higher educational institutions in the US and Nigeria, and non-governmental agencies in the region to institute an effective environmental policy, research studies, and cleaning mechanisms.

(xvii) Western governments should endeavor to make their foreign policy goals more compatible with their often-stated ideals of democracy, freedom, justice, and human rights. If the United States, and Britain, for example, are strongly committed to the democratization of the world and

would take the practical means to do so, as in Iraq, then they cannot ignore the Niger Delta. This is necessary to establish stability in the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea.

(xviii) Western nations should join forces with the United Nations to draft an international law which makes the illegal transfers of embezzled money by political leaders and high government officials illegal. It should be noted that embezzlement is a major source of poverty in the world. Poverty increases the need for people to act militantly against their perceived oppressors.

(xix) Western nations should join forces with non-governmental organizations, the indigenous peoples of the world and the United Nations to draft and pass an international law which obligates that multinational companies pay equitably, based on negotiations, for their business activities in the Niger Delta. The law should make it possible to charge, arrest, and try any chief executive officer (CEO) for any violation of the law.

### **United Nations and the Wider International Community:**

The United Nations has important roles to play in bringing about an end to the crisis by coming up with affirmative actions. This is because, the world body would be so overwhelmed if the crisis is allowed to degenerate into serious war between the

government and the militant groups “fighting for the cause” of the oil rich region. The fear of the consequences of Nigeria witnessing a conflict of serious proportion was expressed by an elder statesman, Solomon Lar, when he said “ If anything happens to Nigeria, (God forbid) it will be serious. The continent cannot cope with the refugees from Nigeria. Even the whole world will not be able to cope with the refugees”.<sup>96</sup> The following are recommended for implementation by the United Nations:

(xx) Provide resources for and support an independent environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the Niger Delta as well as credible, independent judicial mechanism to adjudicate compensation claims, taking steps to ensure that the credibility of such an environmental assessment is not damaged by funding from or association with government and energy companies, and that compensation is distributed transparently in a manner that benefits communities rather than “benefit captors” such as politicians and militant and traditional leaders.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Solomon Lar, a Nigerian elder statesman, former Governor, Plateau State, North Central Nigeria and former Party Chairman of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) expressed this view during an interview with a national newspaper, Daily Sun, 16 July, 2007

<sup>97</sup> International Crisis Group, “Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis”, Executive Summary and Recommendations, [file:///G:/International Crisis Group-Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis.htm](file:///G:/International%20Crisis%20Group-Fuelling%20the%20Niger%20Delta%20Crisis.htm)

(xxi) Offer the good offices of a neutral country without oil interests in Nigeria to mediate between the federal and state governments and Niger Delta parties, based on the proposal already accepted in principle by several activist and militant groups. This is necessary in view of the fact that the Rev. Father Matthew Hassan Kukah's Ogoni-Shell Reconciliation Process has not been able to reconcile the two sides. The Ogoni people are skeptical about the role played by an International Catholic Charitable Organization, with supposed link with Shell, in bringing about the reconciliation process.<sup>98</sup>

## **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, one could see that the crisis in the Niger Delta did not just start today. It is more than four decades struggle. The method and dimension it has taken now should be of great concern to lover of peace. Militant groups are proliferating and mutating rapidly. The security situation is deteriorating, with consequences for the oil industry and Nigeria, as a country, because of the strategic importance of the region to the socio-economic development and wellbeing of the nation. Militants recognize that they do not have to capture ground or even win major battles to accomplish their goals. They also realize that Nigeria's military and other security agencies are not sufficiently trained, unmotivated and ill-equipped to handle a full-fledged insurgency in the Delta's unforgiving terrain of swamps and creeks. Shutting down Nigeria's oil production would hurt the federal government of Nigeria more than any other party to the crisis and create what the various militant groups hopes would be an environment for insurgency to flourish. The government of Nigeria, the other stakeholders and the international community should address the region's grievances before the security situation further degenerates.

It should be emphasized that we took up this research work, because of our concern for peace and stability, in all its ramifications, in the Niger Delta region in particular, and Nigeria in general. The issues of conflict and peace are central to all those who are concerned about the future of Nigeria.<sup>99</sup> We found out that the crisis in the Delta of Nigeria has to do with internal factors as a result of lack of economic growth, poor governance and poor attitudinal response to the concern of the people of the region by both the government and oil multinationals.

The various recommendations canvassed for the resolution of the crisis are necessary if peace and stability are to be established in the Niger Delta. As a result, it is time for Western nations that have oil companies in Nigeria to understand the situation and assist in resolving the problems, instead of remaining aloof. They should assist Nigeria in breaking the jinx being

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<sup>98</sup> Victor Sam, "MOSOP Can't Speak for Ogoni" Punch Newspaper, June 9, 2007

<sup>99</sup> The American Government in 2006 predicted that if efforts were not made to tackle the problems in the Niger Delta, with other problems confronting the country, Nigeria might soon become a failed state.



associated with petroleum as devil's excrement, which brings trouble, waste and corruption.<sup>100</sup> Nigeria and other stakeholders should recognize the fact they all stand to lose if serious efforts are not made to resolve the crisis.

## **Appendix**

### List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation  
CNN: Cable Network News  
CD-LF: Community Defence Law Foundation  
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency  
DVS: Delta Volunteer Service  
EFCC: Economic and Financial Crime Commission  
EITI: Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative  
EPA: Environmental Protection Agency  
ETA: Environmental Impact Assessment  
FAAC: Federal Allocation Accounts Committee  
IDP: International Development Partnership  
IEA: International Energy Agency  
IMF: International Monetary Fund  
JTF: Joint Military Task Force  
JRC: Joint Revolutionary Council  
MOSEIN: Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality  
MOSOP: Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People  
MTN: Mobile Telecommunication Network  
NEITI: Nigerian Extractive International Transparency Initiative  
NDPVF: Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force  
NNDC: Niger Delta Development Commission  
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization  
NNPC: Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation  
OMPADEC: Oil Minerals Producing Area Development Commission  
OPEC: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Country  
SPDC: Shell Petroleum Development Corporation  
SSCDU: South-South Community Development Union

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<sup>100</sup> Juan Pablo Perez Alfonso, former Venezuelan Oil Minister and Founder of OPEC in Jill Shankleman's "Oil Profits and Peace", Op. Cit. P.40

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## **Editorial**

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