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Crisis in Nigeria`s Niger Delta: Exploring the Cause and Effect on Ogoni People

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Abstract: Ogoni people are suffering from serious deprivation and negligence incubated by the discovering as well as exploration of oil in Nigeria`s Niger Delta and hatched by unending crises in oil bearing communities in the region. This work examined crisis in Nigeria`s Niger Delta, viewed age long agitation and struggle by Ogoni people, explored the causes of the ageing crises and their effects on the people. The study adopted explorative analytical method. Land and natural resource ownership and management are far-fetched among other reasons, part of the major causes of unending crises in the region. Security instability, sexual violence and economic distortion accounted for the effects of the crises on Ogoni people. The work reviewed generally, the background to the growing crisis in Nigeria`s Niger Delta. It viewed the age-long agitation and struggle by Ogoni people, nature and causes of the crisis as well as examined the effects of the crisis on the people of Ogoni.

Keywords: Cause, Crisis, Effect, Niger, Delta, Ogoni and People.

INTRODUCTION

With its vast endowment of resources and profile for socio-economic growth and benefit to Nigeria`s general development, the Niger Delta region still suffers the threat of deteriorating environment and economic conditions. And, as a sensitive region with fragile ecosystem, oil bearing communities in the area are under serious social tensions. Unwelcome situation in Nigeria`s Niger Delta region has worsened over the years. The region is one of the largest wetland in Africa and the world. Topographically, the Niger Delta is deltaic in nature with 75,000 square kilometers of land extending east ward from the Benin and west ward to the Imo Rivers (Ifeka, 2000). The region has rich oil-bearing sedimentary rocks with majority of onshore oil production activities centered within the freshwater swamps and rainforests (Ikelegbe, 2005). The ethno-linguistic diversity of the region demonstrates the ethnic numerosity in Nigeria. Nigeria`s Niger Delta is a home to over 40 ethnic groups in the country. In the region, there are 3000 communities, more than 40 ethnic groups and 200 dialects spoken in the region (Ikporuko, 2004). Out of the 36 states in the federal republic of Nigeria, 9 (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers, and the outlying Abia, Cross River, Edo, Imo, and Ondo states) are in the Niger Delta region. Ijaw or Izon is the major ethnic group in the region which has a population of 31 million people representing about 23 percent of the country`s total population (Iledare & Suberu, 2012). Subsistence agriculture, hunting and fishing are the major occupation of the people of the region (Ilorah, 2000). Nigeria`s oil and gas are derived from the Niger Delta`s fragile ecosystem. Nigeria`s oil exports in 2010

alone were N9.15 trillion or US\$59 billion as at then (Kemedi, 2003). Widespread deprivation and social discontent exist in the region as 68% of the residents are rated poor. Unemployment rate which is 27% in the region is six points higher than the national average of 21% in the country (Larson & Soto, 2008). The central government in Nigeria as local people in the region`s oil bearing communities perceived is acting negligently with the ecosystems they depend on for their livelihood are been devastated as a result of oil extraction. This perception has culminated in crises drawing disproportionate reaction from the government thus, aggravating the people`s feelings of negligence and alienation.

The largest mangrove forest in Africa and the third largest in the world is the oil-bearing areas of Nigeria`s Niger Delta. The forest serves as a good source of herbal medicine, fish and timber to the people. The region is endowed with important ecosystem services such as stable soil with improving habitat for ranges of wildlife like endangered species such as the Delta elephant, white-crested monkey and hippopotamus. The region offers potential for Nigeria`s commercial fisheries. Although, the discovery and exploration of oil in the region has resulted in deforestation and ecological degradation which are posing threats to renewable natural resources and services offer by the ecosystem. Several environmental challenges brewed by pollution arising from oil related activities like drill cuttings, drilling mud, fluids used in production, chemicals injected to control corrosion or to

separate oil from water, and general industrial waste threatened the life of the people of oil bearing communities in the region (Aworawo, 1999). Gas flaring and increasing cases of oil spills and blow outs are additional problems witnessed by people in oil bearing communities in the region.

Crises in the forms of popular insurgency and simmering grievances against the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies especially on environmental pollution, rising poverty among the people and political marginalization have been witnessed in the Nigeria's Niger Delta over the years (Nwozor, 2010). In the world, Nigeria's level of gas flaring which is next to that of Russia is the second highest thus, making environmental damage severe in the Niger Delta. By estimate, two-third of natural gas in oil bearing communities in the Delta is flared. This estimate is similar to over one-third of natural gas produced in the UK's North Sea oil and gas fields comparatively. The estimate is enough to meet up the energy needs of industries in Germany (Obi, 2010). In fact, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) officially estimated that 2,300 cubic meters of oil approximately are spilled separately in 300 incidents annually (Oluwaniyi, 2011). The ecological impact of oil-related pollution in Nigeria's Niger Delta has been the depletion of aquatic and marine life as well as the destruction of crops and agricultural land, disrupting the people's traditional livelihoods.

The destructions amounting from oil exploration couple with the deterioration in means of livelihood of people in oil bearing communities culminated in serious grievances which resulted in uprising calling for proper management of environmental and use of oil revenue to improve the living conditions of people in oil bearing communities. The central government especially under military regime reacted aggressively by deploying the federal army into the region to quench uprising by indigenous communities in the Delta. Militarization instead of dialogue of the crises metamorphosed into a severe conflict economy in which kidnapping for ransom, crude oil theft, sea piracy, protection racketeering, urban and gangland crime became common activities to the youth in the region. And, with the end of military rule in the country, political democratization manufactured by civil governance put in place, additional cleavages which introduced yet, more forms of intense struggles for resource among regional political actors in the Niger Delta. Emerged new forms of intense resource struggles were directed toward creating and sustaining networks of distributive patronage. This dimension of struggles produced additional grievances leading to grow in political violence and arms proliferation in the region. As attention shifted to resource struggle, government became more concern with enforcing security stability to make oil exploration and export possible (Salami,

2011). More focus on security stabilization resulted in little attention to social provision and the result of such negligence manifested in severe shortage of basic amenities, high poverty and unemployment. This development affected Nigeria's daily oil production target between 2005 and 2009 as the country's oil output fell by about a quarter due to the crisis in the Niger Delta region.

In 2009, amnesty which was offered to the Niger Delta militants by the Nigerian state started. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs were part of the amnesty which to a larger extent has improved the stability situation in the region. Security stability created by the amnesty offered to Niger Delta militants has also translated in increase of oil production and revenue earning to the country. Although, amnesty program has succeeded in promoting stable security condition in the Delta but then, lack of jobs for militants rehabilitated, high poverty, youth unemployment combined with lucrative opportunities in the conflict economy still pose a serious threat to peace and security in the region. Prolifically, oil theft is still on. Nigeria, as the national oil company (NNPC) estimates lose between 150,000 to 180,000 barrels daily to oil bunkering and spills. This loss as estimated is amounting to US\$7 billion annually and it is 6% of Nigeria's total production which is above Ghana's daily oil production (Ukiwo, 2011). Suspiciousness, lack of trust, hostility and violence characterized oil bearing communities' relationships with oil companies. Tactics adopted by youth to get more payment from oil companies include hostage-taking, kidnapping of oil personnel, piracy, inter-community hostilities as well as illegal oil bunkering (Mahler, 2012). These methods are adopted by the youth due to lack of transparency in compensation for oil pollution given by multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region.

One of the fundamental demands of ethnic minorities in Nigeria's Niger Delta oil bearing communities is the control of oil resources. Measures adopted by the central government have not been effective and able to satisfy this demand. Oil bearing communities have been plundered with no or little compensation and repatriation policy to address environmental damages accruing from oil exploration. Though, coercive measures to ameliorate youth militancy in the region have been minimal but then, amnesty program which started in 2009 has to some extent, reduced the level of crises in the region (Duffield, 2010). The government amnesty program provided financial incentives and rehabilitation for those militants who handed over their arms and renounced violence. About 8,000 militants are reported to have participated in the amnesty program, in which they were sent on various training and skill acquisition programs outside the country. Amnesty program was a welcome development in the region though, it has not

been able to provide tangible answer to the actual question of the people of oil bearing communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

CRISIS IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA

Nigeria's Niger Delta has been married by crisis over the years. Most of the crises emanated from total neglect and absence of infrastructural development in the region. By estimate, over 2.5 million barrels of crude oil is produced on daily basis within the region. The production contributes about 95% of the country's foreign exchange earnings and 90% of its revenue (CBN, 2011). In Nigeria's Niger Delta, ageing crisis is between oil bearing communities and the federal government of Nigeria. Unimaginable mass poverty and negligible development exist in the region despite huge oil revenue earnings from the area. Nigeria's federal government and oil companies operating in the region are intensifying efforts to develop infrastructure necessary for improving people living conditions. These efforts have been minimal and insufficient to ameliorate the problems of the people of the region. Instead of reducing, more tensions and crises have been created by minimal efforts of government and oil companies operating in the Niger Delta. Operations of oil companies and national security have been threatened by the growing crisis in the region. Youth have become restive under the guise of demanding for greater control of their natural resources (Etekepe, 2009). However, little substantive progress has been made, which addresses development issues in the producing region. Hence, the region continues to witness unimaginable mass poverty and low levels of human development, environmental degradation, social inequalities, unemployment, and so on. It is, therefore, an irony of fate that the area, which produces a bulk of the oil is the least developed in the country.

British invalidation and overthrow of the Royal Niger Company (RNC) which later paved way for colonialism fueled the Akassa Raid of 1895 in the Niger Delta region as the inhabitants of the area resisted economic domination by British merchants. This historical perceived feeling of domination was aggravated in 1990s because after several years of oil exploration the region is still suffering from acute shortage of infrastructures required for structural and human development in the oil bearing communities. The region is still impoverished, polluted and under-employed (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2010). Crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta attracts retrogressive experiences and due to its backwardness, it has been understood largely as an intra-class rivalry upon its initially recognition as inter-class struggle. Elite manipulation stand has been adopted by the federal government of Nigeria by recruiting and appointing local and active persons from the region against the active population. Stand taken by the government in addressing the struggle, made crisis

in the region a struggle between liberal elites (traditional rulers, politicians, top government officials, oil company executives and businessmen) and radical groups (human rights activists, journalists, youths, students, workers, women and the peasantry). The radical groups have solid justifications for their separate stands and positions (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2010). Hence, in every community the leadership and, in fact, the entire population are divided along these lines. It is no longer a secret to note privileged members of the region working for peace, which is perceived as tolerance of the unjust system.

Crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta first hit the boiling point in 1965 during the region's struggle for economic survival in which Isaac Adaka Boro and his group took up arms to fight for the establishment of a separate political entity and state for the Niger Delta. This struggle was interrupted and ended by the first military coup of January 15, 1966. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been suffering from age long social, economic and political marginalization. This exclusion has continued to serve as the central cause of crisis the region is witnessing. Human development indices which remain low in the region serves as predisposing factors. Unhealthy influences created by competition for economic resources have resulted in political instability, social/communal conflicts, poor governance, environmental degradation and economic deprivation in the region. The situation in the Niger Delta was later worsened by poor infrastructural development promoted by erratic electricity supply, shortage of safe drinking water, poor road networks, dilapidated health facilities and inadequate educational institutions (Akpabio & Akpan, 2010). These issues which were taken for granted by the government are promoting factors in the ageing crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The actual communities where oil is produced boast of the highest rate of poverty in the region. People in towns and villages where oil is produced are not only poor but live in communities where the pictures of inadequate social and basic amenities are clearly visible. Crime has become common attitude among the youth of such communities with prostitution getting higher as a profession among the female. The landlords and not the federal government as MOSOP remarked are the ones to whom royalties and rents should be given. Therefore, such benefits must be remitted to the landlords by oil companies but not the federal government (Basedau & Lay, 2009). Unconscionable usurper tendency of the Nigerian Renter State is grossly pronounced in landlords and oil companies serving as exploitative illegal tenants (Eteng, 1997). In the laws that govern oil industries activities in the Niger Delta region, only operational issues are addressed. These laws serve the interest of oil companies and the federal government while those of oil-bearing communities in the region are neglected. The laws as oil-bearing communities believe are fundamentally responsible for the

underdevelopment of Nigeria's Niger Delta region (Izeze, 1994). Federal government's apprehension, detention, trial and killing of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight others due to the massacre of Ogoni four otherwise addressed as Vultures by their radical youths demonstrated the intra-class struggle inherent in the Niger Delta crisis (Ukpere, 2007). The radical responsible for the killing of Ogoni four are new comers trying to take over the leadership of the Niger Delta. To them, the liberals are conspiring with the federal government to sabotage the region's age long struggle for social, economic and political emancipation. Therefore, the liberals are corrupt and deserved to be killed for the region to have a clearer theater for successful struggle. Conspiracy strategy of the federal government romancing with the region's liberal to further marginalization of the people of the region has culminated in the failure to solve the crisis in the region as subsequent programs adopted as measures to ending the region's crisis have not been able to make the Niger Delta region a completely secure region for oil exploration by oil companies operating in the region.

Insensitivity of oil companies operation in Nigeria's Niger Delta is yet, an additional dimension to the crisis in the region. Though, oil companies are contributing in the establishment of life improving projects in the region. They are expected to be active agents of development in the region. Their primary responsibility involves the fact that they cannot go beyond the objective of acquiring profits. But then, they have failed in the area of addressing environment problems especially gas flaring and oil spillage in their areas of operation in the region (Tayo, 1994). Pollution which has devastated the region's economy also made meaningful development difficult. Distorted socio-economic development with incommensurate infrastructural development as balance measures is visible through environmental degradation. Oil companies lack of legal obligations to their host communities has also sideline the communities from having a say in how and what happens to revenue generated from oil produced on their soil. Absence of input from oil-bearing communities in the management of oil revenue symbolizes not only a dysfunctional relationship between the oil-bearing communities, federal government and oil companies. It also demonstrated an advance version of marginalization translated by the destructive tendency of global capitalism which has made the federal government and oil companies more interested in making money from oil than improving affairs in oil-bearing communities (Hamilton, 2011). Likewise, in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, the protest of the Ogoni people which eventually led to the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa are part of the struggle against the destructive tendencies of capitalism incubated by state and transnational interest of profit acquisition with minimal attention to environmental management in the region.

The federal government in Nigeria has arrogantly treated and deprived oil communities in the Niger Delta. This treatment led to the feelings of perpetual disinheritance and expendability by the Niger Delta people. The desire to fight perceived injustice by the people thus, led to the formation of several ethnic associations championing first, ethnic interest and later regional cause. Groups like the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Association of Mineral Producing Areas of River State (AMPARS), Association of Minority Oil States (AMOS), Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Nigeria (EMRON), Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Africa (EMIROAF), Movement for the Reparation to Ogbia or Oloibiri (MORETO), Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Niger Delta Vigilante Service (NDVS) and the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) amongst others (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2010). The common demand of the formed groups is the restructuring of Nigeria's federal system in a way that the states and not central government has more autonomy (OBR, 1990). This common demand is a sort of self-determination agitation with the Nigerian federalism.

Additional demand by the groups include the request that oil companies contribute to the creation and expansion of infrastructural facilities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Basic amenities, community development projects as well as employment of indigenes among others are areas multinational oil companies operating the region are requested to participate in. Vandalization of pipelines, oil bunkering, kidnapping and hostage taking of oil workers as well as children and other persons not connected with oil companies are activities promoted by formed groups in the region to express the intensity of their demands. The groups interest in pressing hard for the actualization of their demands has made the Nigeria Delta region flourished with small arms and sophisticated weapons smuggled from regional and international markets-development which has resulted in the increase arming of militias (Okolie-Osemene & Okanume, 2012). In a reactive manner, the federal government responded to the restiveness created by the groups with military solution which was considered as an attribute of state failure by people across the country. And, presently, instead of the regular police dealing with militant youths, the government has stationed the military under a Joint Task Force (JTF) command to deal with the militant youths in the region.

Oil pollution, environmental degradation, destruction of environment and local population source of livelihood have subjected the inhabitants of Nigeria's Niger Delta region to untold hardship. The causes of people's hardship in the Niger Delta are part of the major drivers of crisis in the region. Oil companies need for land and its occupation to construct flow lines and stations as well as oil installations has continued to

serve as the genesis of confrontations between host communities, the government and oil companies (Aghalino, 2009). Land in the region has a serious socio-cultural importance and oil industries demand for it has led to the emergence of clash between corporate practices and traditional beliefs of the people in the region (Nwankwo, 2015). Multinational companies are thirsty for land to expand investment and increase profit while the people are ever ready to protect the land so as to carry on their traditionally inherited source of livelihood. This exists amidst the fact that land in the region is a scarce resource considering the deltaic nature of the region.

Environmental pollution by oil companies in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is often resisted with violent protests by oil-bearing communities. A number of the Niger Delta ethnic groups especially minority group like the Ogoni felt they were being exploited and aroused tension between the Ogoni people, the Nigerian federal government and foreign oil companies metamorphosed in the rise of heavy crisis in the early 1990s in the region. In January 1993, crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta reached its peak as a result of persistent environmental pollution and economic marginalization by oil companies operating in the region. Some 300,000 Ogoni people protested against oil companies in the crisis. And, as the popular unrest grew steadily, various ethnic groups in the region joined the crisis demanding for compensation for age long ecological damage and control over their land's oil resources. The unrest manifested itself at the outset as peaceful activist organizations uniting their members on the basis of championing the cause of ethnicity.

OGONI AGITATION AND STRUGGLE

The perception of the Ogonis is that environmental degradation, political marginalization, economic strangulation and slavery which they are subjected to on daily basis have endangered their lives as people. Government and multinational oil corporations operating in the region have not responded to their call for justice. Unprecedented response to the Ogoni people state of condition in the region has generated the growth of environmental rights activism promoted by civil society groups formed to champion the struggle for justice in the region (Ojatorotu, 2009). The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) as one the groups formed came up with an inclination directed towards ethnic nationalism aimed at liberating the people of Ogoni land. The evolution of the politics of oil in the Niger-Delta is a gradual process, where ethnic identity is transformed into a mobilizing element, not only for contesting access to state and oil power, but also a modality for organizing social forces into an alliance for resisting, alienating, extracting and excluding the Niger-Delta from the proceeds meant to alleviate the suffering of the people

having been deprived of the use of their land and water to earn a living. Ethnic nationalism in the Niger-Delta has become one of the major problems in the region as many people under the disguise of fighting for the economic emancipation of the Niger-Delta people exploit the oil companies and federal government by demanding money that never gets to the hands of the downtrodden citizens in the Niger-Delta region.

Resource control generated critical dialectics which are significant to the understanding of the problem of Ogoni people in the oil bearing communities in Ogoni land and Nigeria's Niger Delta entirely. Persistent demand for resource control by the Ogoni people has continued to remain the main basis for conflicts without end in Ogoni land. The Ogoni agitation for resource control was necessitated by Nigerian state structural deformities which have consistently neglected the people demand for sustainable development. Rather than achieving development, Ogoni people perceived that oil production and activities of multinational corporations are bedeviling their land. Environmental degradation, mass poverty, oppression, coupled with cases of human rights violations by government security agents in Ogoni land are part of the loudly complains of Ogoni people (Oyefusi, 2007). The absence of workable institutional and financial mechanisms to deal with the cases of ecological damage and compensate Ogoni people over the environmental damage caused by oil exploitation provided the basis for militancy and activism in Ogoni land over the years (Welch, 1995). The grievances of Ogoni people over the revenue allocation mechanism in the country allegedly prompted the renowned environmental activist, Ken Sarowiwa, to embark on a peaceful struggle for the emancipation of the Ogoni People from state-imposed poverty.

The Ogoni people in 1990 evaluated their condition and drew a conclusion that abundant oil and gas wealth in their land feeds the entire nation but still, they live in abject poverty and hardship. Joblessness grow higher daily with Ogoni land recklessly devastated by oil exploitation and ecological warfare sponsored by transnational oil industries operating in Ogoni land against the Ogoni people. Federalism in Nigeria can be traced back to British colonial rule. Prior to the emergence of the British Government in the West Africa sub-region, the political entity now known as Nigeria was populated by people from diverse ethnic nationalities, kingdoms and communities governed by traditional institutions. Most of the people who lived in the Nigerian traditional society shared almost everything in common and resolved every dispute that occurred within the community through the traditional judicial system (Etekpe, 2009). Nonetheless, there were some unacceptable practices in the traditional African societies, such as the killing of twins, human sacrifices to the gods and the abolishment of despised set of living-humans yet dedicated to gods. These people are

referred to as 'outcasts', locally known as 'Osu'. They were treated as alien or exiles in own community. The early missionaries in Nigeria fought and stopped the killing of twins along with other barbaric acts. The threats to modern norms and values were significantly reduced by the British colonialists in Nigeria (Etekpe, 2009). Federalism was found to be the most appropriate political system because of the pluralistic nature of the society in terms of ethnicity and religion.

Ogoni people agitation and struggle for resource control took a central position in the national question discourse, ethnic minority politics and environmental degradation in the early 1990s. The struggle and agitation were largely promoted by the activities of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). Wiwa's movement contributed tremendously to the popularity and internationalization of Ogoni agitation and struggle. Till date, little effort has been made to address the importance and implications of Ogoni people demand for Nigerian citizenship rights (Dibua, 2005). Perceived marginalization of the citizenship rights of Ogoni people because they belong to ethnic minority groups and the neglect of their land from which Nigeria derives the bulk of its revenue contributed to the accentuation of their agitation and struggle (Sesebo & Ollor-Obari, 2001). In the Ogoni people's case, two broad levels of the struggle can be identified, namely, the governmental level and the non-governmental level. The non-governmental level includes pan-Niger Delta groups, ethnic and communal mass-based associations, youth groups and environmental activist groups. In virtually all the cases, the Ogoni struggle has been cast in the form of citizenship rights.

Some form of contradictions and tendencies were revealed in the Ogoni agitation and struggle like in those of the other groups involved in struggling for resource control in Nigeria's Niger Delta. As an ethnic cum communal movement Ogoni youth under the banner of MOSOP were gingered by the marginalization of their citizenship right especially in relations to use and control of oil resources their land is endowed with. The state led agitation is motivated by motive different from that of the Ogoni people. State agitation for the control of oil resources is promoted by politicians' interest of patronage activities and desire for primitive accumulation of wealth but not for the citizenship rights of the people of the region they governed (Odunlami, 2009). Politicians representing Niger Delta people and interest in the central government are mainly elites in cohort with the federal government conspiring and working together in the exploitation of the people they represent and their land (Omoweh, 1998). Such elites deceptively make their people to believe that they are truly championing the agitation for resource control and citizenship rights at the central level so as to continue remaining relevant and retain loyalty of their people at the region. Elite

conspiracy has made the Ogoni agitation and struggle like those of the other groups in the Niger Delta region a form of opportunism used to facilitate personal enrichment thus making the agitation and struggle not only complex but controversial in nature. Despite the delicate dimension taken by the Ogoni agitation and struggle especially under the auspices of MOSOP led by Ken Saro Wiwa, the struggle assisted in exemplifying before the international community, the actual feelings and demands of the people of Nigeria's Niger Delta. The MOSOP to a significant extent, largely demonstrated the capability necessary as a mass based communal movement required for pressing home the demand of Ogoni and those of the people of other oil-bearing communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Though, MOSOP fronted the agitation and struggle of Ogoni people but its prominent leaders belong to the class of intellectual elite of the Niger Delta region. Ken Saro Wiwa once held different positions in both state and federal appointments while others like Ben Naanen was a university lecturer. Therefore, it was argued that those leading Ogoni agitation and struggle do not actually represent the marginalized and dispossessed Ogoni people. But then, leadership style and activities of MOSOP leaders demonstrated that their interest in the Ogoni agitation and struggle is far separated from the interest of gaining access to state power (Osaghae, 1995). If their interest was to acquire access to state power, they would have adopted self-seeking approach to the agitation and struggle rather than subjecting themselves to the agonistic precautions they endured in the movement. Thus, their actions considering the difficulties they endured in the agitation and struggle were mass-based. They succeeded in eliciting the support of majority of the Ogoni people and the international community to the condition of their people and communities. MOSOP leaders are not only intellectuals but also the front contenders for agitation and struggle for resource control as well as citizenship rights of the Ogoni people.

The high level of Ogoni agitation and struggle in papers, speeches and interviews by MOSOP leaders coupled with the internationalization of Ogoni plight transformed MOSOP into an active instrument of struggle against marginalization, deprivation and dispossession of Ogoni people and oil producing communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Ogoni agitation and struggle which later transformed into MOSOP started with an excellent degree of grassroots organization. This made it not only effective but successful in the mobilization of the various units of Ogoni people and society. MOSOP is a conglomeration of different community-based groups with the National Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP) been the most radical, organized and disciplined (UNEP, 2011). As an active organization within MOSOP, it exhibited a phenomenal role in the mobilization of Ogoni people

for the agitation and struggle against age long marginalization and deprivation of the Ogonis.

MOSOP and Ogoni leaders launched the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) in October 1990 with a view to introducing a new dimension of agitation and struggle for resource control and citizenship rights of the Ogoni people. The launching of the bill contributed to the intensification of the struggle against environmental degradation by oil companies in Ogoni land. The neglect, political and economic marginalization of Ogoni people as well as their citizenship rights dispossession by the Nigerian State was detailed by the bill which narrated the separateness and distinctiveness of the Ogoni nationality. The bill among other demands, requested that, "political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people; the right to the control and use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development; adequate representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions, and the right to protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation" (Nabbon, 2010). MOSOP based its argument for the Ogoni control of its natural resources on ethnic citizenship rights arguing that since Nigeria is a federation of ethnic groups, ethnocentrism is prevalent in the country. It noted that the 'rights and resources of the Ogoni have been usurped by the majority ethnic groups and the Ogoni consigned to slavery and possible extinction.' However, given the manipulation of ethnicity by the Nigerian elite class who see the phenomenon more as a means of primitive accumulation, it is doubtful whether basing resource control on ethnic citizenship rights will actually benefit the majority of the common people.

Despite clarification by various Ogoni leaders that their peoples demand was not to break away from the Nigerian federation but rather a request for political and economic justice, the demand of the Ogoni people as categorically stated in the bill was seen by the Nigerian authorities as an attempt to secede from the federation. Political and economic justice demanded by the bill as Ogoni leaders clarified aimed at guaranteeing autonomy over political and economic affairs of the various ethnic groups in the country. The Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Africa (EMIROAF) in its proposal for Nigeria's restructuring advocated for the operation of true federalism in the country. True federalism as EMIROAF stated should allow each ethnic group in the country, the right to political self-determination, resources and environmental control. Although, EMIROAF insist that "all constitutions should provide that any ethnic group can have a separate state if it so wishes at any time, and that it can secede from the federation if it so wishes" (Naanen, 1995). This insistent tend to justify the secession allegation put forward by the Nigerian authority against the Ogoni people. MOSOP prefer loose federation and if possible, a confederation which grants greater

political and economic autonomy to various ethnic groups that comprises Nigeria. But then, available evidence does not justify the accusation of secession put forward by the Nigerian authorities against MOSOP. The champions of Ogoni agitation and struggle subscribed to the view that a truly autonomous and fiscal federalism in Nigeria can be achieved through the convening of a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) under which the federating ethnic groups will determine the basis of the country's union (Cyril, 2010). The demand by the Ogoni for local autonomy reflects a long-standing tradition in various African countries in that most communities believe that the distant state cannot be trusted to understand or act effectively on grass-roots priorities.

Ogoni agitation and struggle were facilitated by MOSOP in the form of ethnic minority citizenship rights to resist the continue dominance and exploitation of Ogoni people by the Nigerian State, majority ethnic groups getting more share of oil revenue than the minority Niger Delta ethnic groups and the oil companies. In this regard, indigenous or internal colonialism as a concept has been incorporated into the description of the dispossession of Ogoni people citizenship rights as well as their relegation to the status of subjects rather than citizens. Three principle developments vindicate the conjecture where internal colonialism of Ogoni people and communities can be located. Ethnic based political domination used to expropriate oil revenue accruing from oil-bearing communities in Ogoni land for the benefit of dominant groups is the first, the second, is the conspiracy between dominant groups, oil companies and state enterprises restricting minorities in oil-bearing communities access to modern and stimulating sectors of the oil economy and, the third, is environmental degradation caused by oil exploration undermining the traditional economy of Ogoni people which are farming and fishing with no alternative prevention or management measures taken (Basedau & Lay, 2009).

Dispossession of natural resources and environmental degradation were complaint about by the Ogoni people specifically against Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and the Nigerian government. Since 1958 as MOSOP pointed out, Shell's oil exploration activities were exhibited recklessly with disregard for environment and natural resources of Ogoni land. Shell as MOSOP argued carry out its oil exploration activities in manners which appeared as if it was deliberately prosecuting an ecological war on the Ogoni people. The people of Ogoni land considered such activities and described them as genocide capable of resulting in the extinction of the people (Okolie-Osemene & Aghalino, 2011). The complaint of Ogoni people over marginalization and deprivation of citizenship rights as MOSOP claimed was welcomed with an act of intimidation and terrorism perpetuated by Shell and the federal military authorities of Nigeria.

Increased repression from the side of the Nigerian State led Ogoni people into adopting more militant measures of resistance thus, provoking the government into responding with severe brutality adopted through military actions.

Ogoni people between 1990 and 1993 under the leadership of MOSOP took to various militant and passive acts of resistance. Coercive agents of the Nigerian State ruthlessly repressed these acts leading to the massive destruction of Ogoni properties, maiming and killing of many Ogonis. Besides repressive approach adopted to thwart Ogoni agitation and struggle, Nigerian government went further in 1992 by introducing a decree making demand for self-determination by any community and ethnic group an offense against the Nigerian State and government. In addition to self-determination, the decree declared disturbances possible of disrupting oil production activities as treasonable acts capable of attracting death penalty. In line with this decree, the Nigerian government resorted to the detention of Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni leaders, as well as the periodic breaching of Saro-Wiwa's citizenship rights by impounding his passport and preventing him from travelling out of the country to attend international human rights conferences. In June 1993 following the successful boycott of the presidential election by the Ogonis, Saro-Wiwa was arrested and charged for acts of treason. Again, in May 1994 Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders were arrested and charged with murder for which they were eventually executed in November 1995 after what amounted to a kangaroo trial.

The oil companies, Rivers and federal government allegedly adopted the tactics of stage managing and sponsoring of violent conflicts among oil producing communities to undermined and checkmate resistant measure and struggle for citizenship right by Ogoni people. Crisis between Ogoni people and their neighbors started (Cayford, 1996). Some of these conflicts involved the Ogonis and their neighbors. It is significant that before then many of these communities did not have noteworthy disagreements. Examples of such stage-managed and sponsored conflicts involving the Ogonis were the purported attack by the Andonis on the Ogonis between July and September 1993, the attacks on the Ogonis by the Okrikas in December 1993, and the Ndokis in April 1994. These developments aggravated not only but made crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta a complex issue. The Ogoni agitation and struggle illustrate a particular conception of sovereignty and security saw the formation of a special Rivers State Internal Security Task Force Code-named Operation Restore Order and Stability in 1994 by the late Sani Abacha. Headed by Major Paul Okontimo, the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force was stationed in Ogoni mainly to protect oil and Shell. The Task Force was sufficiently resourced militarily by the Nigerian State and financially, by Shell Oil

Company with an implicit mandate to suppress broadly, the Ogoni struggle and agitation as well as any form of local resistance that directly threatens oil flows in the region.

The Ogoni agitation and struggle directed at the restructuring of Nigeria's ill and defective federal structure no doubt threaten national economy as bulk of the country's revenue comes from oil and Ogoni land has high percent deposit of the commodity. Ogoni ideology potentially spread to other areas in the Niger Delta thus, hampering the country's daily production target of crude oil. The impact of Ogoni agitation and struggle on national economy was feared by the then head of state Late General Sani Abacha. Though, Ogoni struggle for democratization of social life in Nigeria was non-violent but the government reacted to the struggle in a brutal manner. The River State Internal Security Task Force under Major Paul Okuntimo launched a brutal campaign torturing, repressing and intimidating people by killings, flogging, maiming and raping in Ogoni land with impunity. Major Okuntimo's impunity was self-evident in Ogoni land. He boasted that he was trained to kill professionally and has over 200 ways of killing a human. Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted that "about 2000 Ogonis suffered extrajudicial prosecutions by the Security Task Force" (HRW, 1999). In fact, military personnel attached to the Security Task Force committed '71% of the rape cases' during the Ogoni crisis. The intimidation and repressive strategy of General Sani Abacha culminated in the hanging of nine MOSOP leaders including the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa by the federal government on November 10, 1995.

KEY CAUSES OF THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS

The crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta region is triggered by a number of factors. Environmental degradation, revenue allocation formula, state-imposed poverty federalism, resource control and unfulfilled promises made by the government are some of the causes of crisis in the Niger Delta. Ogonis resort to ethnic citizenship rights agitation and struggle for resource control was fueled by the marginalization of the citizenship rights of Ogoni people. Crisis in the Niger Delta region is promoted by the revenue allocation formula adopted by Nigerian federal government (Dibua, 2005). Crisis connected with grievances over revenue allocation formula grew from bad to worst in the Niger Delta region in the early 1990s as a result of the birth of social movements and militant youth groups. The groups became not only aggressive but also, challenged the Nigerian state as well as the policies, attitudes and activities of the transnational oil corporations operating in the region.

The Niger Delta crisis is developed by oil exploration and land ownership as well as the laws

regulation them. Militants in the region advocated for abrogation of the laws as they do represent the interest of the host communities (Nna & Ibaba, 2011). Resource control and self-determination are major causes of the crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Though, struggle in the region has been given various interpretation especially in relations to causes but, Ogoni people and the other ethnic groups in the region at different forums have loudly voiced out that their agitation and struggles are directed toward the control of resources on their soil and self-determination to decide whether their membership in Nigerian federal system is necessary and required by their people (Welch, 1995). These issues count much as part of the causes of the crisis in the region. Additional cause can be interpreted in the revenue sharing formula being adopted in the country. How well the Nigerian government is able to resolve it count a lot in the determination of peace and development in the region (Obi, 2010).

Multinational Corporations inability to contribute progressively in the development of social corporate responsibility activities gingered the protest led by Ken Sarowiwa which was welcomed with severe brutality by the Nigerian government forces leading to massive human rights violations in Nigeria. Transnational oil companies' failure in this direction culminated in the wake of hostilities and March for self-determination in the region (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). The struggles and repressions they attracted put together, threw the region into a serious zone of confrontation by different groups and state forces.

Nigeria by global index is the sixth largest producer of oil in the world. And, all of its oil exploration is done in the Niger Delta region. The region has been generating billions of dollars for the government since oil was discovered in 1956 and its exploration started in the region. Oil from the region powered the nation's economy. Nigeria's oil endowment is pronounced globally by its membership of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Despite the huge amount of oil revenue flowing into the government coffer, the local people in the Niger Delta live in abject poverty that expresses a state of deprivation, to the extent that the people have no access to basic social amenities, like good water and electricity. The majority of the Niger Delta people live in creeks, where they watch daily seeing the oil industries making a fortune from the petroleum deposits in the region (Welch, 1995). This has made state-imposed poverty, one of the major causes of crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

The Federal Government failure to fulfil promises it has been making to improve living and environmental conditions in the Niger Delta region has also contributed in fueling crisis in the region. Government has also ignored public call to compensate people of the region for adverse effects oil production is

inflicting on their soil. Such failure to respond to people call has contributed in to the hostage taking of oil expatriates and vandalization of oil pipelines in order to siphon crude oil (Afinotan & Ojakorotu, 2009). Government's retaliation aggressively with disproportionate use of force to such activities has led to the escalation of crisis in the region from which several communities have been displaced with several people killed and women assaulted especially as in the case of Ogoni communities. Issues surrounding the causes of crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta are numerous. Far from the ones accounted for by literature and knowledge include the controversial handling of citizen's welfare in oil bearing communities in the region by the federal government and oil companies operating in the region. The resultant effects of the crisis on the people of the region especially the Ogoni people who have suffered severe deprivation as a result of oil exploration in their land is greatly sympathetic to examined. In depth look into the effects of Niger Delta crisis on Ogoni people will serve as a source of enlightenment to the world on the severity of dangers inflicted on Ogoni people by crisis in the region.

EFFECTS OF THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS ON Ogoni PEOPLE

The Federal Government's retaliation to youth restiveness with severe brutality which escalated the crisis in Niger Delta region resulted in serious adverse effects on Ogoni people. Crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta has led to the death of many lives and destruction of properties belonging to Ogoni people. The effects of the crisis culminated in an entrenched vicious circle which further established suffering among the people of Ogoni land (Omeje, 2006). Ogoni people have lost basic human rights. Crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta has led to difficulty in access to food, clean water and food for the Ogoni people. Unemployment, poverty and displacement levels have raised among the Ogoni people. The number of Ogoni people going hungry grew higher in 2012 than 1992 to a historic high of 1 billion (Ejobowah, 2000). Crisis has created serious negative social effects on Ogoni people. Drugs/drug abuse, prostitution, crimes, and juvenile delinquency have been promoted among the people as a result of the crisis. Social equity and welfare of the people have been harmed by the crisis. Accessibility to social infrastructure and job opportunities has negatively been battered among Ogoni people by the crisis (Odoemene, 2012). Cultural heritage, increased poverty level in addition to social exclusion and loss of available jobs have grew among the people as a result of insecurity caused by the crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

The security and safety of Ogoni people have been adversely affected by crisis in the Niger Delta. Terrorist activities using explosive devices grew at a

point extending negatively beyond the people to the environment. In addition to the lives of Ogoni people wasted, their assets, climate and soil have been destroyed by these activities. Displacement of the Ogoni people from their ancestral homes to temporary settlement usually refugee camps due to the crisis also escalated humanitarian crisis suffered by the people. There is usually no proper waste disposal system and toilets in refugee camps and boreholes are usually dug next to sewages this has led to the poor quality of water and consequently led to cholera and other health related challenges. Income generation among Ogoni people has fallen because of the crisis (Watts, 2004). Production and productivity of Ogoni people have reduced due to insecurity created by the crisis which has also affected Ogoni people source of income generation. The crisis has resulted in economic sabotage in Ogoni land. Oil company workers have been kidnapped by militant groups in different attack. Oil installations have also been attacked and pipelines vandalized in oil bearing communities in Ogoni land (Orubu *et al.*, 2004). Insecurity situation amounting from such economic sabotage has resulted in the closure of activities by oil companies operating on Ogoni soil. Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) was forced out of Ogoni land and its stoppage of exploration led to decline in economic standard of Ogoni people, the Niger Delta and Nigeria.

Ogoni land became insecure at a point when crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta grew to its peak. The people of Ogoni became ungovernable at that period of upheaval as a result of persistent protest and violence by Ogoni people. The level of progress among Ogoni people and that of their communities became affected negatively due to repeated protest and violence. Economic activities were halted; poverty level among the people grew with time, available jobs reduced as oil exploration was negatively affected by unending crisis. Although, repeated protest and violence by Ogoni people which have hatched crisis in their communities have also impacted negatively on their lives and the general development of their land, the crisis have also persuaded the federal government of Nigeria to consider some developmental needs of Ogoni people and land (Omeje, 2006). Thus, in 1992, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and in 1999, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) were established and charged with a number of responsibilities basic among which include responding to ecological problem and developmental demands of oil bearing communities and people in the Niger Delta. And, recently, The Federal Ministry of Niger Delta was established.

The effects of crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta on Ogoni people were not only negative but also huge and traumatize. The establishment of the commissions also encouraged intra-communal clashes as communities began to fight among themselves over

ownership of oil wells while the local residents jostled for posts in the commissions. The loss of lives and destruction of properties experienced in the conflicts are sad to remember. Sexual violation of females by the Nigerian military drafted to the region during the conflicts period amounted to a serious violation of human rights and dignity of Ogoni people especially women. And, above all, the activists and elites, who were meant to be acting on behalf of the people, used the commissions to enrich themselves thereby undermining the reasons for the creation of the commissions. Insecurity and sexual violence have added to the pictures of how negative crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta region has impacted on Ogoni people.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's Niger Delta region is a very sensitive axis in the country because of its contribution to national foreign earnings. Greater percent of the country's foreign earning comes from crude oil export and for now, all crude oil produced in the country is from the Niger Delta region. Crisis in the region especially in Ogoni communities have affected the activities of oil companies operating in the region. Protest and violence by Ogoni people over the years have aimed at sabotaging oil exploration so as to force the federal government to respond to the needs and aspirations of Ogoni people and their land as well as those of the entire oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta region. Repressive measures often adopted by the federal government forces which have always been witnessed with severe brutality and violation of human rights of Ogoni and the people of the entire Niger Delta have promoted the escalation of the crisis in the region. Most, if not all of the crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta are oil induced. Activities of oil companies operating in the region have detrimental effects on the life of the people and their soil. Inadequate attention to environmental impact issues emanating from oil exploration in the region as well as some other health and economic disadvantages caused by such activities have contributed to reactionary protest and violence from the people. Government response to the crisis using military actions assist in fuelling conflict in the region.

Revenue allocation formula considered unfavourable to the Niger Delta region, state-imposed poverty, epileptic federal system, environmental pollution and inadequate compensation for damages inflicted on agricultural land by oil activities as well as low attention to the people's demand by the federal government have contributed tremendously to the causes of crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Crisis in the region have affected the Ogoni people seriously to an extent that their citizenship status in Nigerian federal system became questionable to them as a people whose land provide the entire nation with bulk of the revenue needed to move government activities and expenditures forward. Ogoni people have been adversely affected by crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta. In repeated crisis in

Ogoni communities, several lives have been wasted. Properties worth millions of money have been destroyed by the crisis in Ogoni communities. Thousands have been displaced and rendered homeless by the crisis. Women in dozens have been raped. Economic distortion which sets in has contributed in lifting high, the level of poverty among Ogoni people. Inadequate attention to infrastructural development couple with destruction of available facilities have added to the suffering of the Ogoni people. Ogoni people believe that their right to control the resources of their soil has been taken away through state promoted conspiracy by the Federal Government of Nigeria and Multinational oil companies operating in Ogoni oil bearing communities.

Ogoni people agitation and struggle for resource control has instead of recognition, attracted military action from the Nigerian government. Their call for self-determination has also at a point been defined as a move toward treasonable felony. These however, implies that the actual question of Ogoni people and those of the Niger Delta region has not yet been answered. The Nigerian economy itself is at risk. Every security destabilization act adopted by aggrieved group affects oil activities and thus, reduce daily production target of crude and translating in reduction of inflow of foreign earning to the country. Resource control is possible but hardly feasible. Non-oil producing regions of Nigeria banking on population and land mass have been enjoying greater allocation from oil revenue than the Niger Delta region with small land mass and low population in comparison. But then, derivational principle contained in the revenue allocation formula to enable the Niger Delta region benefits from the proceed generated from their soil has been married with tense central politics against the derivational principle obtained during the period when agriculture served as the nation's main source of foreign earnings. There is actually the need to readdressed the revenue allocation formula in use in Nigeria with specific attention to derivational principle. The federal system in use has also failed partially in cementing appreciatively, the unity its harmonized since 1914. Although, a sovereign national conference for the regions that make up the federal union is not only necessary but will serve as a test to understanding whether the federated union are still willing to remain united under a single national government or not may create avenue for each group to go its separate way. This development, non-oil producing region will not be ready to accept. Therefore, the derivational principle in use as well as the revenue allocation formula in totality need to be justly drawn to the advantage of all regions of the country.

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