

**International Conference on
The Nigerian State,
Oil Industry and the
NIGER DELTA**



CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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THE NIGERIAN STATE, OIL INDUSTRY
AND THE NIGER DELTA**

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THE FUTURE OF NIGER DELTA: ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGIES FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

Today, the Niger Delta is best known as a region that sustains much oil exploration and exploitation by the agents of western economic powers. The Niger Delta basin is considered the mainstay of the Nigerian economy for its significantly high level of oil reserves. The region is rich in biodiversity as a result of the presence of rivers, mangrove and freshwaters forests and abundance of aquatic and wildlife. The genesis of the militants groups against oil companies can be traced back to the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders in 1995. The area is perhaps the most under-developed portion of the country despite forty-three years of exploiting its non-renewable oil. It is a region that is rich in natural resources and impoverished by the oil companies and the Federal Government of Nigeria. There is no doubt that the persistent crisis in the region has an adverse effect on the state and level of entrepreneurship and potential foreign investors. This paper will consider the causes and impact of incessant militant groups on attack on oil companies, entrepreneurship and strategies for peace and security in Niger Delta region.

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, Nigeria has the third largest concentration of poor people in the world, after India and China. According to the World Bank Statistical data (World Development Indicators database, April 2006) seven out of ten Nigerians live on less than US\$1 per day. Nigeria has experienced negative and slow growth and is one of the weakest growing economies in the world on a per capita basis. The housing situation has worsened and the number of homeless people has increased, while urban slums have been increasing progressively in number and size. Physically infrastructures have degenerated considerably due to lack of adequate maintenance, coupled with a rapidly growing population. Nigeria, in recent times, has recorded unprecedented crises that have threatened human security stemming from authoritarianism and bad governance. The country's recent political and economic history is characterized by corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, deprivation, abuse of human rights, environmental pollution and degradation; poor macro-economic management. All of these have culminated in violence conflicts in the country.

Disputes over government resources and control of crude oil, including the stolen oil, drive the violence that has engulfed parts of Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta. For instance, Warri is a strategic city in the Niger Delta. As the second major oil city after Port Harcourt, Warri is the center of scores of oil installations and the nerve center of the operations of oil companies in the western Niger Delta, particularly the United States major, Chevron-Texaco. The insecurity produced by the Warri, Bayelsa and Port-Harcourt has repeatedly led to the shut down of oil installations, leading many to believe that the Niger Delta region is not a safe place for investment.

In the recent past, the militant groups have adopted new tactic of capturing highly placed Nigerians hostage for several months demanding for huge sum of money before their release. The conflict in the Niger Delta did not start yesterday, nor the day before, it has been with the people like a chronic plague. One of the results of the unending crisis in the Niger Delta area is that the so-called rich oil-city that used to be a booming commercial emporium has now become a literal ghetto, a mere shadow of its former self. So many multinational and other companies have had to relocate to safer climes as the perennial inter-ethnic war rages on. Delta State remains the largest producer of petroleum and gas in the country. Accordingly, the socio-political stability of the state ought to have been uppermost in the mind of the Federal Government. Curiously, however, successive Federal Government have behaved as though instability rather than stability in the area were a sine qua non to the subjugation of the people whose oil wealth constitutes the mainstay of the nation's economy.

The perpetrators of violence in Niger Delta are the state security forces and armed ethnic militias. Although peace negotiations of various sorts are in progress, the depth and profundity of the crisis requires immediate and serious attention.

Poverty has come to be common term in Africa as whole. Nigeria, which is said to be the giant of Africa, isn't left out from the entangling hold of poverty. Many attempts have been made to put an end to this life-terminating menace called poverty, but it seems like all efforts are in vain, and the people keep suffering from a lack of food, money and the necessary things which make life worth living. Poverty can be define to include low level of income, the absence of medicare, poor sanitation, the absence of good drinking water, illiteracy, the inability to participate effectively in decisions that affect an individual's life directly; and the lack of security and protection from crime, (Corbett, 2006). The effects of poverty may include poor nutrition, mental illness, drug dependence, crime and high rates of disease.

In the midst of plenty, the Niger Delta is perhaps not to be found in development projects but in the heavy development of its coercive apparatus. Today, the region can best be described as one at war with itself, the Nigeria State and the Multinational Oil Corporations.

The following are some key pertinent questions to guide the presentation of this paper. What is security in all its ramifications?. What is Peace and Nigerian Experience in the Niger Delta?. In an attempt to answer these questions, the objectives of this paper are stated as follows:

- i. To determine the causes of the conflict in the Niger Delta and to,
- ii. To proffer strategies on how to ameliorate the conflict for sustainable peace and security in Niger Delta.

This paper is divided into the following sections. Section 1 is the Introduction. Section 2 discusses Peace building and human security in Nigeria especially Niger Delta. Section 3 explores the causes of the conflict in Niger Delta while Section 4 focuses on the opportunities that is alternative economic activities yet to be tapped in order to reduce unemployment and conflict in the Niger Delta. Section 5 highlights the effect of entrepreneurship on poverty reduction while the paper is concluded in section 6.

Understanding Peace Building and Human Security

Peace building is a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political as well as economic transformation (Boutros-Ghali, 1995). In developing countries, they often include skewed land property structures, environmental degradation, and unequal political representation on state level (Zartman, 1995; Markakis, 1998). The structural dimension of peace building focuses on the social conditions that foster conflict. Stable peace must be built on social, economic, and political foundations that serve the needs of the populace (see:<http://cmtoolkit.sais-jhu.edu/>).

The root causes of crises most times can be traced to skewed land distribution, environment degradation, and unequal political representation. Economic peace building targets both the micro-and macro-level and aims to create economic opportunities and ensure that the basic needs of the population are met. On the microeconomic level; societies should establish micro-credit institutions to increase economic activity and investment at the local level, promote inter-communal trade and an equitable distribution of land, and expand school enrolment and job training. On the macroeconomic level, the post-conflict government should be assisted in its efforts to secure the economic foundations and infrastructure necessary for a transition to peace. Assefa (2001) opined that peace building is therefore the effort to promote human security in societies marked for conflict. Human security on the other hand means safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It means freedom from pervasive threats to people's basic rights, safety, and lives. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, asserted that: "human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life- whether in homes, in jobs or in communities (UNDP, 2000). They identified seven dimensions of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. All these are what the Niger Delta youths are demand from government.

Economic security requires an assured basic income for individuals; food security requires that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food; health security aims to guarantee a minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles; environmental security aims to protect people from the short-and long term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment. Political security assures that people live in a society that honors their basic human rights; community security protects people from loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence while personal security protect people from physical violence, whether from the state or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state actors, from domestic abuse.

In spite of the government's deploying of troops to maintain peace and order, violence keeps braking out.

It is not surprising that the conditions of life of many Nigerians have been deteriorating, characterized by limited access to health services, poor and inadequate housing, limited access to safe water, limited access to education in urban and rural areas, bad roads and poor road networking, limited access to agricultural inputs and implements, limited access to income generating activities among many other.

The Causes of the Conflict in Niger Delta

The conflict in the Niger Delta has remained one of the most intractable conflicts in the country since the Biafran civil war with no clear solution in sight. A credible response to these threats to human security lies in peace building. Since 1999, Nigeria has been experiencing conflicts arising mainly from deeply rooted threats to human security. The threats to human security have been exacerbated by a long period of economic mismanagement; endemic corruption and lack of accountability and transparency experienced, especially within the thirty years of military rule in Nigeria. The relationship between human security and peace building is dynamic and interdependent. To enhance the constructive transformation of the existing conflicts in Niger Delta, Nigeria should develop sustainable infrastructure of human security that is guaranteed through packages of peace building measures.

The oil rich Niger Delta, in the south of the country, remains the scene of recurring violence between members of different ethnic groups competing for political and economic power, and between militia and security forces sent to restore order in the area. Intense fighting continued in the Niger Delta region between ethnic groups (especially the law) and government soldiers and security forces. A state of emergency, declared for a few days at the of December 1998, lasted into January 1999 after as many people were killed in clashes between protesting Ijaw youths and government troops in the Niger Delta of Bayelsa. The militant have resorted to capturing oil workers most foreigners to make government succumb to their yearnings and aspirations. Although expatriates in Nigeria have traditionally only been the target of kidnappings in the Niger Delta, and to date have been released without harm, the shooting dead of two US citizens working for Chevron Texaco in an ambush in the Delta in April 2004 was a worrying development. In Niger Delta communities, militants' youths from disgruntled communities now target oil facilities and their personnel to squeeze money, jobs and social amenities from wealthy, though vulnerable, oil multinationals. An increasing number of oil workers have been kidnapped, including foreigners who work in isolated areas in the difficult-to-police swampy terrain of the Niger Delta.

Oil workers are usually seized in large groups from isolated locations, held for short periods and freed unharmed. Such attacks are just one facet of violence in the Niger-Delta, where poverty fuels resentment against the oil industry. Sabotage of pipelines and flow stations, abductions of expatriate oil workers, theft of barges full of crude oil and turf wars between militants are also commonplace. In the case of shell, the number of community-related disruptions (which include the closure of production facilities, seizure of assets, blockade of access and disruption of drilling activities) increased by 10 per cent to 176 in 2004, compared with 2003. Nigeria has lost 500,000 bpd in crude production since February 2006.

There were also violent conflicts between the Ijaws and Itsekiri groups, between Ijaw and Ilaje groups in south-western state of Ondo, and between Yorubas, and Ijaw in the southwest. In the oil-rich Niger Delta region, ethnic armed groups are fighting for greater control of the region's oil resources. Among these is the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force; led by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. The rebel Niger Delta People's Volunteer in Nigeria is fighting for autonomy in the country's oil-rich Niger Delta (Reuters, September 29, 2004).

Government has continued to employ extreme measures arising from the intensity of ethnic and religious violence to curb social unrest and violence. A recent report by the World Organization against Torture claimed that security forces, operating with orders from the government, were responsible for over 10,000 Nigeria civilian deaths. The most serious challenge to the governments' authority has come from the rebellious groups in the oil-producing Niger Delta. Since the mid-1990s a number of militant groups, angry at their people's political alienation and economic exploitation, have waged an increasingly violence struggle against the state and multinational oil companies operating in the area. A further cause of the violence in The Niger Delta is Nigeria's oil-related and environmental protection legislation, which protects the interests of the oil, and gas-producing companies over the community needs and interests. Nigerian Federal Government or its authorities, expropriated land for mining or oil purposes, usually without adequate compensation. In addition is the lack of adequate and fair compensation for environment damage. Communities seek jobs from companies, which they are not in a position to provide easily, as the jobs require professional skills, and specialized education, which workers in communities often do not have. Communities also seek infrastructure from companies. Other demands include compensation for loss of land and for environmental damage to crops and fishing ponds due to oil spills. Some communities seek contracts from companies. There are also concerns regarding failure to clean up and lack of consultation when development is being planned. In some cases perceived breaches of these agreements and demands have led to violence, including abductions and sabotage.

It is not surprising that the conditions of life of many Nigerians have been deteriorating, characterized by limited access to health services, poor and inadequate housing, limited access to safe water, limited access to education, limited access to epileptic supply of electricity in urban and rural areas, bad roads and poor networking, limited access to agricultural inputs and implements, limited access to income generating activities among many others. As a result the region is confronted with many social, economic and political problems, such as poverty, high-income disparities, crimes, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, communal conflicts, collapse of social and economic infrastructure and problems of rural development among many others.

The Niger Delta Area and its Biodiversity - Alternative Economic Opportunities

Besides white collar jobs, there are alternative economic activities available in the Niger Delta and can be found in biodiversity. Biodiversity is the key to food security. It is the most important foundation for food security. Food security ultimately depends on the protection of the cultural and natural ecosystems and services, as well as the knowledge and materials needed to provide and process food and drinks, etc. For example, our forests, reefs, rivers, agricultural systems, firewood and knowledge about farming, fishing, food preservation,

processing and cooking etc. Although the Niger Delta is biologically the least known ecosystem in Niger (Ogbe, 2005), it has Africa's largest mangrove forest (Olomukoro, 2005). Olomukoro (2005) reported that the Niger Delta has the most extensive fresh water swamp forest and Central Africa and most of Nigeria's remaining primary forests. The Niger Delta covers an area of 70,000km² in the central part of Southern Eastern Nigeria. The Niger Delta includes States like Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross-River, Akwa-Ibom, Edo, and Ondo.

Biodiversity provides immense economic values in the area of ecotourism and sustainable livelihood of local communities and for conservation of natural environments, which was recognized internationally when the United Nations declared 2002 as the international year of tourism. Ecotourism represents one of the area where the link between economic development and conservation of natural areas is potentially clear and direct. Ecotourism could help generate benefits to local communities such employment and minerals revenues. It could also provide for infrastructure such as roads and electricity or provide proceeds for community projects such as school construction and health clinics (Ogbe, 2005). Biodiversity allows for the establishment of forest reserves, natural parks, games reserves, (including wildlife parks, bird sanctuaries and strict natural reserves), special ecosystems and habitats e.g. sacred groves, steams and lakes or other sites that are reserved by local communities for their spiritual, recreational and other socio-economic values. Ecotourism is a vital aspect of biodiversity could serve as a tool for poverty reduction in the Niger Delta zone. Ecotourism is a sub-section of the tourism industry catering for tourists who wish tip visit natural areas to observe wide life, natural landscapes and traditional cultures. The economic benefits of tourism and ecotourism in the country cannot be underscored. There is a general demand in Nigeria and Niger Delta in particular for tourism and ecotourism development. The forester could establish a close partnership with the local people and take into serious and full consideration, their opinions and emotions so that the communities will have a serious belonging (Shuncheng, 1998).

Inhabitants should have access to forest reserves, wildlife sanctuaries and national park to obtain non-timber forest to produce. Ekeke and Nwonuala (1999) reported that the bare areas created in mangroves by oil workers could be successfully revegetated with adapted indigenous tree and shrub species. Education of rural communities on the natural roles and importance of biodiversity can increase their awareness and open avenues for better utilization of forest resources (Idumah, 2001). Development of integrated forestry and food production to boost local employment; forest products and income so as to reduce poverty among the rural dwellers is another way of poverty reduction. Strengthening of the local people's capacity to adopt sound and sustainable agro forestry practices with a view to improving production at minimal costs through improved soil nutrients is necessary. Community participation in forestry activities could be used as a strategy for poverty alleviation (Idumah et al., 2003). The aquatic ecological

problems of Niger Delta region should be improved to alleviate the rural poverty level of the inhabitants. Fishing is the mainstay of economic activities of most inhabitants of the region apart from farming. Effort should be made to improve the aquatic life of the people. Aquacutural and pisicultural environment should be developed. The tourist potential of the

reflect the interest of these dominating groups . In Nigeria, this ruling class, mostly dominated by people from the majority ethnic group of the country, using state protection entrenches itself as an enthusiastic auxiliary of foreign capital.

In Nigeria today, resources are allocated according to the classes that exist in the society. They are allocated both to private and to public ends. This process of allocations takes place through the state and its several agencies. Access to resources, including opportunities for control of the means of production, thus requires the favour of those who control the resources, or who control the private and public institutions, which allocate them. Consequently, politics as being practiced in the current Nigeria political scene, is used as opportunity to acquire wealth and prestige, to be able to distribute benefits in the form of jobs, contracts, scholarship and gift of money and so on, to one's relatives and political class. That is why the different classes in the society tend to struggle for dominance over the means of production that is mostly under the control of the state, which gained control and influence over a significant share of strategic resources that can lead to the creation of wealth in the country. The people of the three major ethnic groups have advantageous control over the people of the Niger Delta Region of the country, by virtue of the deliberate distortion put in place by Nigeria's former colonial masters, employment advantage and so on. Like Smith (2005: 32) put it.

The British cared deeply about oil. They, the government, showed no particular affection to Nigerians in general.

This situation enhances the majority ethnic groups position over the Niger Delta people, in terms of occupation of position and creation of wealth in the country. Because of this, the people of the Niger Delta region, who are the major contributors to the National purse via crude oil, feel short- changed and resort to different methods to seek for redress of their position in the country. Thereby, leading to crisis in the Niger Delta region of the country. For instance, nobody from the Niger Delta Region of the country has occupied the position of the Head of State or its equivalent since the country Nigeria came into existence.

That is to say, that the main issue is centered on who controls the means of production vis-a-vis power control, revenue allocation and sharing of the national resources. Right from the colonial period, especially since Nigeria's independence, till date, the Nigeria Federation has increasingly been built around power and resource control. Those (mostly people from the major ethnic groups) who have managed to exercise the utmost control of this power and resources are finding it difficult to detach themselves. Consequently, all sorts of illegally and legally- backed schemes and tactics are being employed to retain power at all cost. The Niger Delta matters only when oil is to be exploited and protected when the interest of those in control of these resources is threatened. This we feel, will continue to lead to crisis in the Niger Delta area, if not checkmated.

Conclusion

We have been able to establish during the course of this study that the nature and character of the Nigerian state contributed a great deal to the crisis in the Niger Delta, especially when viewed from the political economy perspective. It is discovered that the majority group who

are in control of the means of production in the society, uses some to oppress the people of the Niger Delta who are not in control and are major contributors to the national economy. Therefore leading to crisis in the Niger Delta Region.

We therefore recommend, that the Nigerian State should be restructured. That is, the Nigerian State should be restructured in such away that would be respect and recognise the exclusive jurisdiction of the different states from the Niger Delta Region over their resources, including mineral, mining, oil and gas. In line with the adage that the most expensive peace process is cheaper than the cheapest war, we feel that justice and fair play as regards the proper distributions of positions and adequate representation of the people in the control of the means of production will go a long way towards checking the crisis in the Niger Delta. Rather than deploying more gun boats to the Niger Delta, as most often done by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

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