
OIL PIPELINE VANDALIZATION AND RESOURCE CONFLICT (A CASE STUDY OF NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA)

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Abstract: *This study is intended to access the federal government continuous control of oil resources in relation to oil pipeline vandalization and conflicts in Niger Delta region. It intends to ascertain the reason for oil pipeline vandalization and the unending conflicts, vis-a-vis resources control in the region. It is also aimed at examining the implications of oil pipeline vandalization and the constant resources conflicts in the Niger Delta in particular and by extension the nation in general. Furthermore, the study is intended to examine the response of the federal government to the resources conflicts in the region. In carrying out the study, the researcher made use of both primary and secondary data. The researcher conducted an in-depth interview comprising of two sections a personal data section and a section containing questions relating to the area of study. The data was collected and analyzed using simple percentage. Eased on the findings, recommendations were made in order to find lasting solutions to the problem of oil pipeline vandalization and resources conflicts in the Niger Delta*

Background to the Study

Agriculture was the mainstream of the Nigerian economy, but with the discovery of oil, agriculture was displaced. Since the 1970s, oil has become the mainstream of the Nigerian economy. Over eighty percent (80%) of the oil production is undertaken by multi-national companies (MNCs) in joint venture and production sharing arrangement with the federal government, which have an average share of 57% holding. Oil is also the cementing fabric of Nigeria's unity. It is further, a main object of intra-elite, factional, regional and identity struggles over who controls and benefits (Ikelegbe 2004). This struggle has fuelled a civil war 1967-1970). Since the end of the war, intense hegemonical struggles have been waged. With increasing centralization, the federal government has been the main object of the struggle, as the federal

government through contested legislations has become the owner of oil and gas. The northern hegemony which controlled the military following the July 1966 coup, effectively used military rule to consolidate her hold. A major issue was oil revenue, which it totally appropriated. Who has won or lost in the struggle for resource control is obvious from the skewed distribution of oil-based revenues since the 1970s. By the early 1980s, derivation based funds has declined from 50% at the inception of military rule to 1.5% (Ola and Offiong 1999:124-7; Ikelegbe 2004).

Also all land which were hitherto held in trust by the communities were taken over through various legislations notably, the petroleum Decree Number 9 of 1971, Land Use Act of 1978, section 40(3) and 44 (3) of the 1979 and 1987 constitutions, as well, as the 1999 constitution. With this legislation on ground, oil companies acquired community lands without adequate compensation. Through his process, most of the community lands were lost to the oil companies and what is left exposed to pollution from oil spills and heat from gas flares (Obi 2001). The main occupation of these people which is farming and fishing are destroyed by the activities of oil companies operating in the area. The irony of it all is that the people are deprived of the oil wealth which nature has bestowed on them. According to Obi, what the people see is the flamboyant display of opulence in the highland of the first world created by the oil companies for their staff decorated with all state of the art facilities surrounded by the ocean of deprivation and penury of the 'host' communities (Obi 2001).

This scenario resulted in a deep sense of injustice, large scale disenchantment and bitter feelings and this has led to violent protests and conflicts by the Niger Delta people against the oil companies and the government for the exploration of oil and the ecological destruction of their land. By the late 1980s and 1990s, local grievances and anger had become so much that the regime of community protests had commenced. From the Isoko, Urhobo and Ijaw ethnic areas in Delta State to Ogoni, Obagi, Egi and Ikwerre in River State, communities were protesting the treatment by the MNCS and contesting the nature of corporate governance that left no spill-overs in benefits (Ikelegbe 2004).

The late 1980s was the coalescing point of agitation. There emerged a greater awareness and mobilization among the communities and citizenry. A concert of civil groups emerged which constructed a solid platform of more articulate, complex, political forceful and volatile political demands and intense agitation and resistance (Ikelegbe 2001; (2005). Large scale youth militancy began in 1997 when a rally organized by a pan ethnic youth group protest environmental pollution at Aleibiri Ekermor in Bayelsa State attracted over Eight Thousand youths. In December, 1998, at a rally of over five thousand youths from over five hundred communities and forty clans of the Ijaw ethnic group at Kaiama, where the now famous Kaiama Declaration was made. In the declaration Ijaw youths asked the oil companies and military personnel to leave Ijaw oil areas by December, 30, 1998 or face the consequence (Ollor-obari; 1998). The Kaiama Declaration was the beginning of mass youth mobilization, militancy band popular violence in respect of the struggle. The target of agitation changed from the MNCs to the State. The oil companies became an object of local agitation for local development. Besides that, they became the guinea pigs, whose facilities and production had to be disrupted to the hurt State resource flow and compel its response. One of the falls out of this protracted struggle is oil pipeline vandalization and kidnapping of oil workers. By September 1999, about fifty shell workers, had been kidnapped and release (Arnold 200:224) more "recently, on January 11, 2006 four foreign oil workers were kidnapped by the movement for the

emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Also, on February 18, 2006, another nine foreign oil workers were kidnapped and the forcados crude oil export terminal was set ablaze (Amaize 2006; Okafor and Orere 2006; Odunniyi and Segun 2006).

There have been numerous cases of vandalization of oil facilities and pipeline. In the year 2000, about 900 cases of oil pipeline vandalization were recorded, thereby leading to unstable distribution of petroleum products across the nation. Oil pipeline vandalization, has led to loss of assets, and even lives as witnesses in the Jesse episode in 1999, where over 1000 lives were lost, and the recent Lagos Pipeline fire where over 500 persons were burnt to death (Onwuka 2006). Oil pipeline vandalization is a recent phenomenon in the Niger Delta. Oil accounts for about 40% of the Gross domestic product, 90% of government receipts.

In 2003, the federal government earned about N998.4 billion from external crude oil sales (Lawal 2004). But the irony of this is that, for over 40 years of oil exploration in Nigeria, little attention is paid to oil producing communities. The area lacks social and infrastructural development. The people who are mainly farmers and fishermen are deprived of their means of livelihood as a result of the degradation of the land by oil and gas prospecting and producing companies. Their neglect has led to constant agitation for control of local resources, community conflict and lawlessness by the youths, disruption of oil production activities, the indiscriminate vandalization of oil pipelines, as well as kidnapping/ransom demand. This study is therefore aims at looking at the reasons for oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflict in the Niger Delta, with a view to finding lasting solutions to the escalating conflicts before it results into another civil war.

Statement of Problem

The constant agitation by the people of the Niger Delta for change in the political and economic structure in Nigeria has resulted into lots of conflicts, ranging from the kidnapping of expatriate, to open confrontation by the youths, to vandalization of oil pipelines, to the demand for control of local resources et cetera (Ikelegbe, 2005). The reasons for these can be summed up as a general dissatisfaction among the people of the Niger Delta, for the great injustice, perpetrated by the oil producing companies and the federal government. Instead of finding lasting solutions to the prevailing problems, the federal Government chose the line of confrontation. For instance, in the recent past, Odi community was completely sacked by the military on the order of the president. Will suppression resolve this issue? Why the agitation for control of local resources? Are the activities of the oil companies and that of the federal government aiding vandalization? These and many more are some of their problems I would find answers to. I shall conclude by suggesting ways to resolve the lingering problem of oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflict in the Niger Delta.

Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are:

- i) To assess the federal government continuous control of oil resources in relation to oil pipeline vandalization and conflicts in the Niger Delta region,
- ii) To ascertain the reasons for oil pipeline vandalization and the unending conflicts, vis-a-vis resource control in the region.
- iii) To examine the implications of oil pipeline vandalization and the constant resource conflicts in the Niger Delta.

iv) To examine the response of the federal government to the resource conflict in the region.

Significance of Study

The fundamental error made by the colonial masters in dividing the nation into three geo-political entities, with the northern region alone bigger than the other two regions put together has been one of the causes of political and ethnic problems in the country (Isike, 2003). Hence, the constant agitation by other linguistic groups within the other two geo-political entity for a change the leadership of the country rests on the tripod structure left by the colonial masters. But the economic strength of the country lies within the "rejected" stone-the minority tribes, the "owners" of the much-cherished black gold. Since there is no change in sight, the youths of the Niger Delta have resolved, to take their destiny in their hands by embarking on negative views such as kidnapping of oil workers, oil pipeline vandalization, and bunkering, in a bid to control their resources, (Arnold, 2000:224)

The study is therefore aimed at looking at the relationship between the federal government control of resources from oil vis-a-vis oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflicts with a view to finding a lasting solution to ending what may be termed "cold war" in Nigeria. In addition, the study will be useful to government and its various agencies, the organized private sector, politicians and other researchers alike as a reference material. It will also give the researcher an opportunity to contribute his quota to resolving the lingering issue of oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflicts in the Niger Delta through the recommendation to be proffered.

Hypothesis.

This study is based on the following hypothesis.

- i) That oil pipeline Vandalization and resource conflict is as a result of the general dissatisfaction by the people of Niger Delta with the existing political order.
- ii) That Oil Pipeline Vandalization and armed confrontation in the Niger Delta is as a result of the militarization of the region by the Federal government and MNGs through repression and excessive brutality. That oil pipeline vandalization and the resource conflict in the region is a direct consequence of betrayal of the federal government on the issue of resource control.
- iii) That the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta have gradually degenerated from popular violence in to criminal violence.
- iv) That oil pipeline vandalization is as a result of the great injustice meted to the people of the Niger Delta in terms of development when compared to other developed cities in the country.
- v) That oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflict in the Niger Delta is fuelled by massive youth unemployment and poverty.

Scope/Limitation of Study

The Issue of oil pipeline vandalization and agitation for resource control are fairly recent happenings (Ikelegbe 2004:14). It cuts across the Niger Delta region which comprises: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Ondo, Imp and Rivers State. However, the Niger Delta As a whole is too large to be covered within the duration of this study hence, its restriction to Edo, Delta and Bayelsa States.

The study will restrict itself to the use of in-depth interviews with a number of person

who are major stake holders in the lingering conflicts.

This includes the police, oil workers, the youths, etc. I shall also do a critical analysis of existing works on the issue.

Also, the study shall examine the socio-economic and political implications of oil pipeline vandalization and the resource conflict in the region, as it affects the local producing communities and the country at large.

Definition of Terms

The following are some of the terms/concepts used in this study.

1. Pipeline Vandalization: This refers to the willful destruction of pipeline, which convey petroleum products to the storage stations in the country.
2. Resource Control: This is the act of controlling the resources found within your locality. It can also be seen as a situation in which the local producing communities have a greater share of the revenue from the sale of resources in their area.
3. Derivation: This is a revenue allocation principle in which revenue from resources is shared among the producing communities or state, according to their contribution to the national purse, (Ola and Offiong, 1999).
4. Revenue: Money or taxes which government receives.
5. Conflicts: Disagreement or struggle between two opposing groups.
6. Popular Violence: It is a variant of social violence. It is deployed in the course of popular resistance such as protests. Often it arises in situations of and as a response to state violence (Ikelegbe 2004).
7. State Violence: It is the excessive deployment of state coercive power against the citizenry (Ikelegbe 2004).
8. Criminal Violence: This relates to crime.
9. Exploitation: It means to treat unfairly in order to gain advantage.

Organization of Study

This study is divided into five chapters. In Chapter one, we shall do an introduction of the study, state the problem(s), significance of the study hypothesis/limitation of study, the definition of terms/as well as the theoretical framework. Chapter two, shall be concerned with literature review, while methodology shall form the focal point of chapter three. In chapter four, we shall analyze the collected data using simple percentage. Finally, I shall summarize the entire study in chapter five, and conclude the chapter by giving appropriate recommendations, which if adopted and implemented will go a long way in providing lasting solution to the lingering crisis.

Theoretical Frame Work

This study is based on three theoretical frameworks. These frame work are: the constitutional framework; the explanatory model on group activities and agitation; the theory of justice propounded by John Rawls.

The environment of policy making in Nigeria is a constitutional government structure known as federalism. This is defined by several scholars as the constitutional division of powers between levels of government, with each level getting its power from the constitution (Kunle 1998). A basic requirement for a federal system is the existence of a constitutional arrangement that specifies the functions and responsibilities of the units that make up the federation. In the

early stage of Nigeria federalism, the regions were fiscally richer than the centre but with the advent of the military, into the political arena/ the financial power which hitherto remained with the regions, gradually shifted to the centre, leaving units poorer for it. This situation has continued up to the present day despite the Unending cry for a change by the units (Akinjide 2003).

The constitutional framework therefore directs our attention to the sources of policy flow and decisions and the interest it serves. The implication is that, as long as the constitutional framework presently operated in Nigeria remains, the cry for local control of resources will be unattainable. The resultant effects will be the continuous oil pipeline vandalization and conflicts in the Niger Delta. This is because the present constitution of the country (1999 constitution) did not empower the state government to control their resources as demanded by the Niger Delta people Hence/the continuous agitation by the people of the region for resource control. This eventually culminates in oil pipeline vandalization.

The second framework is the explanatory model on group activities and agitation (Sahliyah 2001). This model talks about collective grievance and relative deprivation which ascribes the ascension of ethnic or group nationalism to the problems experienced collectively by a group. This is based on the group's feeling of unjust treatment and its marginal status in the society. The Niger Deltans see themselves as being marginalized, cheated and neglected, despite the fact that they produce about 70% of the nation's wealth (Ikelegbe, 2005). Thus they vandalize oil pipeline as a means of registering their dissatisfaction with the existing political order. In other words, the Niger Deltans as a group, are flexing their muscles with the federal Government, in order to liberate the region from marginalization and ensure that it take its rightful place in the polity. However, Louis Tilly and Charles Tilly (1981) criticized this model. According to them, the aggrieved group may be too weak and helpless to flex muscles with the federal Government. These scholars (Tilly and Tilly) therefore proposed another model - "the resource mobilization model" to empower the people and reduce the widespread social, economic and political inequalities.

The third theoretical framework is the theory of justice propounded by John Rawls. He explained that the existing well organized society is marred with great injustices. As a result of this, different people lay claim to division of social advantage. He further identified two rules which he referred to as the rules priority. The first is the priority rule of liberty while the second is the priority rule of justice over efficiency and welfare. He further explained that though the individual might not be aware of what he would gain or where he will end, the rules will prevent him from being treated severely, if, eventually he turns out to be one of the less advantaged persons in the society (Dahl 1975). The Niger Deltans are of the view that oil pipeline vandalization is as a result of the great injustice meted to the people of the region in terms of development when compared to other developed parts of the country. According to a statement credited to a spokesman for the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), He vowed that oil pipeline vandalization will continue until justice is done and the people given a fair share of their resources (Oduniyi, 2006). Thus the quest for "justice" is seen as a reason for oil pipeline vandalization in the region.

In conclusion, the first framework directs our minds to the direction of policy flow, while the second and third framework talk about equal opportunities for all, when environment is conducive. But the fact is that the society is not politically and economically equitable, thus,

there will always be constant agitation for resources control and eventually oil pipeline vandalization (Lola-Ebueku, 2004).

Conceptual Clarification

In a society, conflict is inevitable. Some scholars argue that federalism involves cooperation, bargaining and conflicts. This implies that conflict is an integral part of a federal system, and one of the most volatile issues is that of resource control (Isike, 2003).

In the early part of Nigeria federalism, resources were under the exclusive jurisdiction of the regions. But this gradually changed, when the military took over power for many years (Ola and Offiong, 1999).

Local control of resources is an established constitutional principles in a federal system. But a look at the Nigerian experience, shows that Nigeria is a unique federation.

The minorities of the Niger Delta region have been agitating since the 1950s. First, it was against marginalization, neglect and the politics of exclusion by the ethnic majority based ruling political parties and governments of the then eastern and western regions. This snowballed into the minority agitation for the creation of separate regions, which the Willincks commission of 1958, rejected and rather provided constitutional guarantees in the form of fundamental rights. But the commission granted a special developmental status in the form of a Niger Delta Development Board (Ikelegbe, 2005). The adoption of federalism in 1954 was to possibly ensure that the numerous ethnic and linguistic groups particularly the minorities had real self-determination, allowing each to develop at its own pace while not seriously retarding the development of the whole. However, because of the political and economic advantage to the bigger ethnic groups, the minorities were overwhelmed and stampeded into accepting federalism, based on historical and administrative convenience (Isike, 2003).

After the Second World War in 1945, the colonial masters enacted an ordinance, which placed all lands under the jurisdiction of her majesty's government. This implies that, all lands and minerals including oil in, under or upon any land in Nigeria and of the rivers, streams and water courses throughout Nigeria belong to the "CROWN". The early nationalist fought vehemently against this obnoxious law, but capitulated when the leadership of their regions fell on them. When Nigeria gained independence in 1960, everything was passed on to the Nigerian government. The situation was worsened by the land use decree and other obnoxious decrees enacted by the military government. This is still the position today. To change this order therefore will require a fundamental change in the existing political order. We have to embark on an irrevocable commitment to restructure the existing social, economic and political inequality in the Nigeria federal system,

Pipeline Vandalization

Since changing the existing political order will not be easy, the irate youths of the Niger Delta have chosen the only option which they feel can be used to recover what is lawfully and rightfully theirs by vandalizing oil pipelines as a means of controlling the resources that nature has graciously bestowed on them. It is pertinent to note that initial youth resistance efforts were largely through peaceful protests and occupation of facilities. The tone of violent confrontations and vandalization was set by the state and MNCs through militarization of the region and oil facilities, excessive repression and brutality (Ikelegbe, 2004). For instance, Ijaw militant youth protesters during the Kaiama Declaration (1998) in Yenogoa were not armed. But

in response, there were killings and brutalities against youths throughout Bayelsa state.

Armed youth militancy, vandalization and militias phenomenon intensified thereafter (Ikelegbe, 2004: 12). Oil pipeline vandalization, is an unlawful and willful act of destroying oil pipelines used by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to transport its products across the country. According to the records provided by the Pipeline and Products Marketing Company (PPMC), a subsidiary of the NNPC, the network of pipelines is about 5001 kilometers, made up of 4335 kilometers of multi product pipelines and 666 kilometers of crude oil pipeline. These pipelines are supposed to be guarded in principle by combined efforts of NNPC, PPMC/ the police, community leaders and indigenes of the host communities. In spite of this however, it is sad to note that oil pipelines vandalization statistics remain high (Punch, 2006).

In 1999, about 524 cases of oil pipelines ruptures were recorded. This was made up of 27 ruptures by natural causes such as wear and tear caused by corrosion, while four hundred and ninety-seven (497) cases were as a result of vandalization. In the first six months of 1999, four hundred (400) pipelines ruptures had already been recorded of which three hundred and eight-two (382) cases were as a result of vandalization. The NNPC has stated that there were 144b line breaks in Port-Harcourt and Warri areas of the distribution network between April and May 2000 alone (Yakubu, 2000). In the whole of year 2000, about 900 cases of oil pipeline vandalization were recorded, this figure excludes the incident not recorded. Imagine the effect this has on the economy, the billions of Naira lost, the destruction to the environments and the loss of lives and property. Vandalization leads to unstable supply of petroleum products. There is also ecological damage on the environment, and the same people become victims of fire outbreak as in the Jesse saga in Delta State. And more recently, the Illado pipeline fire in Lagos State. Other consequences of the vandalization of oil pipeline and other oil facilities are the massive load-shedding of electricity by the power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), due to the destruction of flow station that supplies gas to the terminal plants at the Delta power station, Afam Sapele and other places. Also/oil production export, was grounded for about one month, in the country, (Amaize, 2006).

In addition, Oil pipeline vandalization has assumed an international dimension leading and highly placed figures in the Nigerian economy society, top government officials. As well as retired military generals, are into big time oil bunkering. (Amaize, 2003). Reports say even the crude is being smuggled, to various refineries outside the country (Associated Press 2004: Ikelegbe 2005). There are foreign nationals who are middle men and linkages with the local conspirators (Oni, 2004). This deliberate economic sabotage is affecting the economy to a very large extent. As at 2003, about one hundred thousand barrels of oil, estimated about U.S \$2.8 million were reported to be stolen daily from the region by oil pipelines vandals and bunkers (Subar and Adesanmi, 2003).

One may be forced to ask why resort to oil pipeline vandalization? Why not seek a peaceful means of resolving the demand of controlling local resources. Peretomode, listed some causes of youth restiveness to include. Destruction of the primary occupation and other means of livelihood of the people; acute discrimination against the people and the criminal neglect of the Niger Delta in terms of social; economic and industrial development by the federal government and oil companies.

Resultant Effects of Resource Conflict

Economic hardship and unemployment of youths, persistent militarization of and extra-judicial killings in the Niger Delta e.t.c. the above causes can also be assumed to be partly responsible for the widespread oil pipeline vandalization.

Egborge (2001) put forward some unanswered questions.

1. Why is Abuja and over fifty Nigerian towns that were hitherto villages 40 years ago, now modern cities whereas Niger Delta look like slum?
2. Why is, Niger Delta gas pumped to generate electricity from non-oil producing state while the aborigines of the Niger Delta live in darkness.
3. What is responsible for the high cost of food items including fish that used to be caught so easily in the rivers and creeks?
4. Why are the Urhobos fighting the Itsekiris of the Ijaws?
5. Why is there so much unrest in the Niger Delta?
6. Are oil and gas deposit blessings of curses?

Nnoli (1989) drew attention to the fact that much of the ethnic tension in African politics results from the struggle of the ethnic group to move to the ladder of inter-ethnic inequality and achieve favourable Position in the system of ethnic stratification. It is pertinent to note that the root cause of oil pipeline vandalization is a general discontent and resentment by the indigenous ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta.

Brume (2000) asserted that these ethnic groups vent their anger, after their environment had been totally devastated, through this unlawful method of "scooping" what they perceive as their oil wealth being unfairly carted away to Abuja and other places. According to P.O. Phil-Eze, Brume's view, validates two plausible theories put forward by Ikporukpo (1988) to explain the occurrences of oil pipeline vandalization. The first theory is that, it is as a result of the quest of big time vandals to make quick money. This is based on the fact that oil companies are supposed to pay compensation to the affected communities. However, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Even where compensation is paid at all, the money is quite small and far from being enough when compared to the damage done to the environment, occupation and social life of the people (Iola-Ebueku 2004).

Adewale (1988) in his opinion asserted that oil pipeline vandalization is a reflection of the general dissatisfaction of ethnic nationalities in the oil producing areas with the oil companies. In other words, the oil producing communities, vent their anger by vandalizing oil pipeline in the over forty years of oil exploration in Nigeria, very little have been done by the oil companies and government to alleviate the suffering pains, neglect, unemployment and environmental degradation suffered by these people. Their oil is used to develop and beautify other urban cities; their land is described by a World Bank report (1991) as the least developed part of Nigeria, in terms of social infrastructure and modern facilities.

According to Fusho Kupolokun, the Group Managing Director of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), pipeline vandalization remains a big obstacle to effective supply and distribution of products in the country. He reinstated the fact that the nation had lost several billions of dollars as a result of oil pipeline vandalization, community unrest, hostage-taking, and seizure of oil installations in the area. Pipeline vandalization, with its associated oil spillage has become a source of worry, as land, water, vegetation, wildlife agent even human beings suffer both physical and ecological damage (Amaize,2006).

Consequences of Pipeline Vandalization

Oil pipeline vandalization has either partially or completely damaged or disorganized economic and social activities in the affected communities and the Nation at large. According to Carew (1991), oil pipeline vandalization has caused oil spillage severe enough to result in mass exodus of people and make some homeless. Consequently, the nation loses a substantial amount of foreign exchange. This was clearly shown by the shell petroleum Development Company (SPDC) (2000) annual report as cited by Phil-Eze (2002). The report indicates that crude oil production was reduced to below 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) from August to November, 2000. Also, it was recorded that Nigeria loses about 631.000 bpd of crude oil due to vandalization of oil facilities and the kidnapping of oil workers (Punch, March 20, 2006).

The consequences of oil pipeline vandalization, kidnapping/hostage-taking on the host communities is heavy, no matter what the aim of the perpetrators are, in a bid to remedy this worrisome situation, the present administration led by President Olusegun Obasanjo set up the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to replace the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC), which was riddled with corruption and had no impact on the lives of the people it served. However, it is clear from the situation on ground that the NDDC has failed to remove poverty, discontent and general dissatisfaction among the people of the region. The federal government recently release of a 9 point development plan for the Niger Delta region, and the proposed creation of 20,000 jobs in the area commendable. However, more concerted and irrevocable efforts should be made to get to the root cause of the problem, and to change the existing political structure, and embrace the practice of true federalism, where states take control of resources available in their areas and pay royalties to the federal government. Until these and other appropriate steps are taken to solve the numerous problems in the Niger Delta, curbing oil pipeline vandalization will be unattainable.

Introduction

The research methodology adopted in this work, is the survey (interview) method.

This chapters, describes the methods and procedures used for obtaining the information needed for the research. The chapter includes the following:

1. Population of study
2. Sample drawn from population using sampling techniques
3. Method of data collection
4. Techniques of data analysis.

Population of Study

Due to the fact that this study is based on an -in-depth interview, the population of this study is made up of fifty persons selected from the Niger Delta Area. The chosen population of this study is considered the most appropriate and reliable because some constitute the explorers while others are the ones deprived of the wealth that nature has bestowed on them.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study employed the simple random sampling method of data collection Fifty (50) persons selected randomly, comprising twenty (20) persons from the public sector, that is civil servants and other government workers, fourteen (14) persons from the private sector, and sixteen (16) unemployed persons from the host communities of Edp, Delta and Bayelsa States.

Method of Data Collection

This study utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source is the use of an in-depth interview while the secondary source shall be a critical appraisal of previous written works on the study under review.

Data Analysis

For this study, data collected from the use of in-depth interview, will form the most important part of this research. The simple random sampling method, was used to select from the population a sample size of fifty persons, where every member of the study population has an equal chance of being selected.

CHAPTER FOUR DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data collected for the study. I shall also comment on the result of our findings. The data for this study were collected through the use of in-depth interview administered to some selected individuals personally. Due to the method of data collection, a total of fifty (50) responds were randomly selected from members of the oil producing communities, staff of oil companies, youths and government officials. The analysis was based mainly on six hypotheses which were tested using the in-depth interview. The demographic data which were contained in section 'A' were analyzed using simple percentage.

Table 4.1: Respondents by age

Age	Number	Percentage (%)
18-25	10	20
26-35	15	30
36-45	13	26
46-55	8	16
56 and above	4	8
Total	50	100

The table above shows that only ten of the respondents which represent 20% of the total respondents were between 18-25 years.

Fifteen of the respondents representing 30% of the total respondents were between 26-35 years. Also, 13 of the respondents were between 36-45 years, 8 of them were between 46-55 years, while 4 of them were between 56 years and above, representing 26%, 16% and 8% respectively.

Table. 4.2: Respondents by Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage (%)
Male		66
Female	17	34
Total	50	100

The table above shows that 33 of the respondents, which represent 66% of the total respondents were male, while 17 of them were female, this represents 34% of the respondents.

Table. 4.3: Respondents by educational qualification

Qualification	Number	Percentage
None		
Primary	3	6
Secondary	10	20
Post	37	74
Secondary		
Total	50	100

The table above shows that the research respondents are made up of mostly those with higher education. Three of the respondents had primary educational qualification, representing 6% of the total number of respondents. Also, ten (10) of them, are with secondary educational qualification. These represent 20% and 74% respectively.

Table 4.4: Respondents by State.

State/Community	Number	Percentage
Edo	12	24
Delta	20	40
Bayelsa	18	36
Total	50	100

The table above shows that 12 of the respondents are from Edo State, 20 of them, is from Delta State, while 18 of them are from Bayelsa State. These represents 24%, 40% and 36% respectively.

Table 4.5: Respondents by occupation.

Occupation	Number	Percentage (%)
Business	4	8

Public Sector (Government Work)	18	36
Private Sector	14	28
Unemployed	14	28
Total	50	100

The table above shows that four (4) out of the fifty respondents run their own private business, representing 8% of the total number of respondents. In addition, 18 of them are employed in the private sector while the other 14 of the respondents are employed in the private sector while the other 14 are unemployed. These represent, 36%, 28% and 28% respectively.

Discussion of Findings

From our findings, it was obvious that the worst hit in the struggle for the control of oil and its consequences are the subsistence farmers/the fishermen and the youths who have become unemployed and poverty stricken ironically because of the wealth which nature had bestowed on them. To protest this great injustice it pitches the people against the oil companies and the government that seems to be indifferent to their. One of the resultant consequences of the conflict is oil pipeline vandalization which has caused a lot of damage to both lives and property as well as wastage of the nation's wealth. Abiodun S. et al (2006), reports that the nation loses about N2.48b. daily due to oil pipeline vandalization and the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta. It is sad to note that the government is very far from the people of the oil producing communities hence, the almost total neglect of the area in terms of infrastructural development.

Also, it was generally accepted by the respondents that the continuous domination of oil ownership by the federal government has led to the general dissatisfaction among the people of the Niger Delta.

Hence, they have taken the path of war to realize their dream of local control of resources. One of the fall outs of this struggle they agreed is oil pipeline vandalization. The consequences of oil pipeline vandalization on lives and property is great. Fresh in our mind is the Hado oil pipeline fire in which over five hundred persons were burnt to death.

Similarly, on the effectiveness of oil pipeline vandalization, as a means, by oil producing communities to control their resources, it was generally agreed by the respondents that oil pipeline vandalization is not a viable means by oil producing communities to control their resources. To them, some selfish individuals are the ones behind the nefarious activities. It was alleged that very high placed and connected elites are involved in the act. These include highly placed serving and retired military personnel, top MNCs officials etc.

The use of force by the government and oil companies to quell the conflict situation, is equally not helping matters. Respondents were of the view that the government and oil companies should tow the path of dialogue rather than that of confrontation by taking concrete steps at ameliorating the plight of the Niger Delta people. The respondents, also agreed that oil pipeline vandalization and armed confrontation in the region is as a result of the militarization of the region by the government and MNCs through repression and excessive brutality. According to them, following the path of war will only aggravate the already tensed

atmosphere. Two wrongs they say do not make a right.

Similarly, the respondents, while reacting to the question as to whether the resource conflict which began as popular violence has degenerated into criminal violence, were of the view that some bad eggs were using the conducive atmosphere provided by the conflict situation to perpetuate their criminal activities. They argued that such a situation in which criminals hide under a conflict situation to perpetuate their criminal activities was natural. ;

Furthermore, the government, MNC and other relevant agencies should provide job opportunities, and the conducive environment that will empower the youths economically. The respondents were unanimously of the opinion that oil pipeline vandalization and the resource conflict in the Niger Delta is fuelled by massive youth unemployment and poverty in the region.

In addition, compensation should be reviewed upward, it should be paid as and when due. Also, the compensation should be commensurate to the damage suffered by the people, individually and as a community.

The oil producing communities should be consulted before decisions affecting them are taken. On the other hand, leaders of oil producing communities should be transparent in the utilization of funds paid as compensation to communities. They should avoid being self-centered as this has contributed to the poor state of infrastructural development in the region.

Also, conscious effort should be made by our leaders and government to change the tripartite nature of Nigeria. Until this is done, finding lasting solution to the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta would be difficult. This could be seen from the defeat of the motion raised by the south-south delegates for the upward review of derivation funds from 13% to a minimum of 25%, at the just concluded national political reforms conference in 2005.

From the analysis of the data so far, it is clear that oil pipeline vandalization has failed to achieve the desired result of controlling the resources available in the Niger Delta area. Although it has drew the attention of the world to the plight of the Niger Delta people, it has become obvious, that the path of war, will lead us nowhere. Therefore, all parties concerned must go back to the drawing board to find lasting solution to the conflicts which has claimed so many lives and property.

The nine point development plan for the Niger Delta, and the proposed creation of 20,000 jobs in the area by the federal government is commendable. However, concrete steps should be taken to urgently implement t these plan.

SUMMARY

In this study the researcher took a critical look at oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. As a case study, data and statistics for analysis were collected from selected respondents from Bayelsa, Delta and Edo States. In the study, 1 attempted to find out the root causes of oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflicts in the Niger Delta with a view to finding lasting solutions to the problem.

One of the significance of the study was to take a critical look at the relationship between the federal government control of revenue from oil vis-a-vis oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflicts in the Niger Delta region to identify the root causes and recommend ways of ending the lingering conflicts.

The analysis of the data collected reveals that oil pipeline vandalization is as a result of the general dissatisfaction of the Niger Delta people with the government and the oil

companies for the great injustice done to them. The continuous control of oil resources vis-a-vis the high poverty level, high rate of unemployment, lack of infrastructural development, pollution of land and water, as well as the near total neglect of the people are some of the reasons for oil pipeline vandalization. To them, oil pipeline vandalization is a means of forcing the federal government and the MNCs to pay positive attention to the demands and developmental needs of the people, in a proportion that is commensurate to the contribution of the region to the national cake. However, a critical evaluation of the conflict situation in the region over the years reveals that oil pipeline vandalization is not a viable means of getting a fair share of the nation's wealth. Rather, it leads to destruction of lives and property; billions of dollars are lost every year to oil pipeline vandals. At the international scene, the nation is portrayed in bad light and would-be investors are scared away. Also, it has led to the massive load shedding of electricity, non-export of crude oil for several weeks as well as massive oil spillage which have polluted the environment

The following revelation was clear from our findings:

- That oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflict is as a result of the general dissatisfaction by the Niger Delta people, with the existing political order
- That oil pipeline vandalization and armed confrontation in the Niger Delta is a result of the militarization of the region by the federal government and MNCs through repression and excessive brutality.
- That oil pipeline vandalization and the resource conflict in the region is a direct consequence of the betrayal of the federal government on the issue of the resource control.
- That the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta have gradually degenerated from popular violence into criminal violence.
- That oil pipeline vandalization is as a result of the great injustice meted out to the people of the Niger Delta in terms of development when compared to other developed cities in the country.
- That oil pipeline vandalization and resource conflict in the Niger Delta is fueled by massive youth unemployment and poverty.

CONCLUSION

The study so far, reveals that oil pipeline vandalization, and the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta has cost the nation much, however, the costs and consequences of failing to prevent this trend is even higher. The Niger Delta people are not born violent; they are useful instruments for peace and nation building. That they are militant and violent today, is as a result of the injustice meted against them by the government and MNCs.

Therefore, to find solution to the lingering crisis, more concerted approach must be adopted to appeal to the people to follow the path of peace and dialogue rather than that of conflict. This approach will require all stake holders in the lingering conflicts to contribute their quota to the long awaited peace and development in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To stem the tide of oil pipeline vandalization and the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta, the researcher hereby make the following recommendations, which if adopted will help in finding lasting solution to this ugly situation:

- i) The federal government, should take urgent steps to demilitarize the Niger delta region, to

pave way for genuine peace in the area,

- ii) The federal government should urgently implement the report of Gen. Ogomudia's panel on Niger Delta, which recommended inter alia 50% derivation for oil producing communities/States;
- iii) A true fiscal federalism should be practiced where the units (federal states) become financially independent and pay taxes to the federation account;
- iv) All oil pipeline should be maintained in accordance with international standard and statutory requirement to secure and ensure pipeline integrity and prevent pipeline ruptures. This will help to control oil spillage;
- v) The prompt and adequate payment of compensation to oil producing communities, for the damage done to their environment;
- vi) The federal government should take more positive steps at the implementation of its nine-point development plan for Niger Delta.
This plan should be adequately funded;
- vii) The Niger Delta people should be made co-owners or shareholders in the oil and gas industry, (Punch, March 6, 2006)
- viii) The Principles of justice as enunciated by John Rawls should be practiced; be. The federal, states and local government as well as MNCs should provide adequate skill acquisition centers, where youths could be trained to acquire relevant skills for self-employment. Furthermore, a functional micro credit Scheme which will financially empower the youths at little or no interest rate, to start their own business after the acquisition of relevant skills should be put in place, (Punch, March 6, 2006);
- ix) The MNCs should employ or empower the youths rather than engage in a system of payment for ghost workers and standby employment, (Ikelegbe, 2004: 20);
- x) The MNCs should be socially responsible to their host communities at all times. They should not wait to be forced to perform their social responsibilities;
- xi) The practice of a true democracy which will enable the people of the Niger Delta to be heard and their needs attended to rather than oppressing them;
- xii) A substantial amount of the resources from the region should be invested in the development of the area;
- xiii) Youths should be given jobs; commensurate with their qualification; and
- xiv) Massive force by the State, has failed to curtail and resolve the conflicts. Hence, the need for dialogue. Oil pipeline vandalization and the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta would cease to be, if the federal government decides to take the path of peace rather than war. Therefore, the federal government should prevail on the multi-national oil companies to invest part of their profit to solve the ecological problems encountered by their host communities. If this is done, oil pipeline vandalization, and resource conflicts in the Niger Delta, would soon become a thing of the past.

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