

Political Ecology of Environmental Management and Resource Control in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria (Lessons of Experience and the Way Forward)

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Abstract Environmental issue is a very sensitive matter in state governance today in sub-Saharan Africa. Its utilization and management are issues that government can hardly ignore. Oil is Nigeria's highest source of foreign earnings. And 94% of the commodity is produce in Niger Delta region of the country while the remaining 4.5% is produce in the south eastern region of the country specifically in areas between Abia and Imo states while the remaining 1.5% is produce in the south western state of Ondo. Minimal governmental attention to environmental management in region where this commodity is produce is translating in demand for resource control and other forms of civil disobedience. Conducted with the use of quantitative research analysis and method, this work examines the meanings of political ecology, environmental management and resource control in relations to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The work also examines some of the emerging lessons been learnt from state negligence of environmental management in the region. Lessons emanating from demand for resource control by the people of the region were also examine by the study. And finally, the work also made suggestions on the way forward on this sensitive political ecological matter.

Keywords Political, Ecology, Environment, Management, Resource, Control, Niger Delta, Lessons, Experience, Way and Forward

1. Introduction

Geo-politically, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria encapsulate the six south-southern states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo and Rivers. Largest percentage of Nigeria's crude mineral resources is found in this region. The location of the resources is both in the onshore and offshore portions of the region-a distribution that has been forming part of the regions problem with the

central authority in relations to ownership of the resources in these different positions. Petroleum in Nigerian law is an exclusive matter. Therefore by control, the federal government of Nigeria has full autonomy over the resources wherever it is found within the country. Although, part of the central government control of the resources is supposed to include the authority's measures towards both exploration of the commodity and management of the environment to ensure that it is not damage by such exploration and the lives of human and animals on the environment are not in any way affected negatively by such exploration. This is actually where the nexus of all the struggle for resource control in the region took up its origin.

Nigeria by world ranking and standard is the highest producer and exporter of crude oil in Africa and the sixth in the world. This ranking implies that the country is by far an affluent nation. Over 2 million barrels of crude is exported on daily basis by the country and greater percentage of this exports is from the Niger Delta region of the country. Petro-dollars and foreign earnings flowing from this exports form greater part of the fund that service public expenditures throughout the nation. Other regions of the country may be suffering from one or more forms of ecological problems ranging from desertification as in the core northern states and gully erosions in the central and eastern states. In the western states, leaching and coastal chopping's of environment are high. These ecological shortcomings, the government has created a special fund to take care of. But the ecological fund does not seems to be addressing the environmental problems in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region of the country-a situation that has been triggering the demand for resource control and other forms of youth restiveness in the region.

Instead of tackling the environmental issues in the region, authority at Abuja is very systematic and skillful in politicizing the ecological situation in the region-a development that has been affecting ecosystem in the region. Oil spillage is a frequent experience in the region. Waters around oil producing communities are not consumable.

Fertility of farmland in majority have been destroyed. Aquatic animals are dying as a result of contaminations caused by oil spillage. Infrastructural development to reverse the worsening living conditions of the people is minimal. Ecological fund and derivation formula of revenue allocation system adopted by the federal government to arrest environmental problems in the region and improve citizens living conditions only succeeded in creating a source of income from which elites and politicians better their lots at the expense of the ordinary citizens. Animal and human lives are seriously under threats. Militancy resulting in kidnaps, demanding for ransoms, destruction of oil facilities, oil bunking, high sea piracy, illegal smuggling of light arms and drugs as well as human trafficking's are the common practices of youths in the region. Provocation as a result of little government attention to the environmental conditions of the region triggered not only the above stated reactions. It also contributed to the rise in demand for resource control-an issue that is today threatening the unity and peaceful co-existence of Nigeria as a single nation.

Ecological fund of the federal government of Nigeria does not seem to be addressing environmental problems in the oil rich Niger Delta region of the country. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and a full fledged Federal Ministry for the region today exist. But still ecological problems in the region are far from been over. Oil Mineral Producing Areas Commission (OMPADEC) which was initially established died a natural death. Funds of the commission was looted leaving the initial ecological problems to persist even more than before. NDDC and the Ministry established for the region today spends most of their allocations on human development than environmental management. This simply means that a paradigm shift is needed in the political ecology of Nigeria in relations to environmental management in the Niger Delta Region of the country.

2. Political Ecology

Political ecology is used to inform policy makers and organizations of the complexities surrounding environment and development thereby contributing to better environmental governance. Decisions that communities make about the natural environment in the context of their, political environment, economic pressure, and societal regulations is also part of what political ecology is used for. Political ecology is also used to look at how unequal relations in and among societies affect the natural environment especially in context of government policy (Robbins 2012:13). In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, complains are on that fund provided for ecological purposes are not utilize for this purpose. There are outstanding cries that the actual communities where oil exploration seems to be causing ecological damages are not often part of the government environmental and ecological policies. This

issues have been creating tension in this region of the country. Major cities of Asaba, Benin City, Calaber, Port Harcourt, Uyo and Yenogoa, do not in the actual sense produce crude oil. But because they are capitals of states where oil producing communities are situated, they end up consuming most of the funds provided for environmental management and development of the actual oil producing communities which are located in the rural areas, creeks and water fronts. Standard of living and income levels in these major cities are the best in Nigeria while in the nearby oil producing localities the issues are the contrary. Between the politicians controlling federal government at Abuja and the elites back in the region, one can hardly understand who is actually cheating or deceiving the people of this region. Federal government policies towards environmental management and improve conditions of living in the region are okay in theory and design. But the reasons why they have not been properly implemented towards achieving the desire objectives is still not clear to the ordinary Nigerian citizens.

Political ecology as Walker (2006:382) will want us to believe is state policy in relations to environmental management. This simply shows that, it is a politics of environment or government policies directed towards effective environmental management. Air pollution as well as water pollution which state ecological policies in Nigeria are expected to address are still on in the Niger Delta region of the country. The Nigerian government politics of environmental science which is thus political ecology is not addressing environmental issues in the Niger Delta region of the country. The inability of the Nigerian government to come up with effective ecological policy that will address the issue of environmental management in the Niger Delta region of the country have triggered several forms of reactions and protests over the years. Although, some of these reactions may be silent and dormant for now probably because a son of the region is the head of the Nigerian government and the people will not want to advance with any form of protest that will sabotage his government efforts towards national governance. But then, the Niger Delta region question to me in a larger extent has not yet been answered. Poverty, shortage of basic amenities, joblessness and low standard of living still exist in this region that produce commodity that fetch the nation 96% of its foreign earnings.

This basis of political ecology is consolidated on the foundation that government as part of its functions of safeguarding its territorial integrity design among others, ecological policies that address its environmental needs and problems and at the same time monitors its citizen's usage and relationship with the same environment. Since 1958 that crude oil was discovered in commercial quantity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, ecological conditions of the region till date demonstrate that the Nigerian government is not actually committing the required fund to the management of the environment where it is making fortunes from. Little governmental attention to the environmental conditions of

the Niger Delta region and that of the people of the same region justify the basis for militancy and demand for resource control in the region and reactions to injustice in the distribution of resources and management of environment that produce same as part of the assumptions upon which political ecology is consolidated. Political ecology as Bryant and Bailey (1997:28) submitted is built upon a number of assumptions basic among which include:

1. Cost and benefits associated with environmental change are distributed unequally. Changes in the environment do not affect society in a homogenous way: political, social, and economic differences account for uneven distribution of costs and benefits.
2. This unequal distribution inevitably reinforces or reduces existing social and economic status quo.

Unequal distribution of costs and benefits and the reinforcing or reducing of pre-existing inequalities holds political implications in terms of altered power relationships that now result in antagonism.

In Nigeria, every region of the country has its own peculiar environmental and ecological problem. Desertification in the core northern states, erosions in the central and eastern states as well as depletion and ocean flooding in the western coastal states are part of the ecological problems that Nigeria as a nation is suffering from. As the custodian of the nation wealth and resources, the federal government owe the responsibility of addressing these environmental menace all over the country. This is however where the issue of the assumptions of political ecology given above comes in. Politicization of the distribution of resources in relations to environmental management and social service delivery considered unequal by the people of the region where the federal government get the resources that earn her money from simply implies that antagonism and disloyalty to the existing status quo is basic.

Political ecology is the study of the relationships between political, economic and social factors with environmental issues and changes. Political ecology studies the complex interaction between economics, politics, technology, social tradition and the biological environment. The academic discipline offers wide-ranging studies integrating ecological social science with political economy. It deals with issues such as degradation, marginalization, environment, conflict, conservation and control, environmental identities and social movements (Wikipedia 2013:1, Robbins 2012:14, Peet and Watts 1996:6). In the oil rich Niger Delta region, issues at stake include marginalization, environmental identities, degradation, conflicts and social movements among others. These from the views above are political ecological issues-reason why state policy directed towards ameliorating them are urgently required. Previous social movements demanding for effective environmental management or resource control in the region have been thwarted with serious repression by the federal government. The incidence leading to the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa and the invasion and destruction of Odi community by the federal government

forces in the region are still fresh on the minds of the Nigerian people. Forsyth (2008:756) posited that political ecology analyses social forms and human organization that interact with the environment. Establishing social movement to demand for proper environmental management by the people of affected community is part of the rights of the people of that community. Political ecology as Neumann (2005: 44) and Keil (2000:19) asserts is at the confluence between ecologically rooted social science and the principles of political economy. If degradation is part of the complains of the people of the Niger Delta region, then it means the pollutions oil exploration is causing on their environment have direct negative effects on their lives and political economy. And this is enough reason why government political ecological policy must be design to address the problem of environmental management in the region.

3. Environmental Management

Environmental management is an issue of increasing concern. It involves the management of all components of the biophysical environment, both living (biotic) and non-living (abiotic). This is due to the relationships of the human environment, such as the social, cultural and economic environment with the biophysical environment. The essential aspects of environment management are ethical, economical, social, and technological. The environment determines nature of every objects around the sphere. The behavior, type of religion, culture and economic practices (Arvai et al 2006:241). Also in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, effective environmental management policy if implemented to the latter will result in measures that will not improve the living conditions of the people of the region. The aquatic animals in waters of the region will benefits. The soil and the insects there in will also gain and the fertility of the soil that is been lost due to oil spillage will be restored. Air pollution will be reduced and the waters of the region will be suitable for consumption to the people of the region. These are the basis of environmental management. In Toolkit (2001:1) environmental management was conceived as a systematic approach to finding practical ways for saving water, energy, and materials, and reducing negative environmental impacts.

Environmental management further aims to ensure that ecosystem services and biodiversity are protected and maintained for equitable use by future human generations, and also, maintain ecosystem integrity as an end in itself by taking into consideration ethical, economic, and scientific (ecological) variables. Environmental management tries to identify the factors that have a stake in the conflicts that may rise between meeting the needs and protecting the environment. Environmental management is part of sustainable development principle (WCMD 2012:1). Environmental management policy that will address the issues earlier noted as the problems of Niger Delta region and at the same time serve as a plan for the future is what is

needed in the region. A solution that will address the immediate needs of the people without taking the future into cognizance is an act of postponing the evil day. Environmental management for the region should be sustainable in nature and reality. This will prevent current problems and conflicts from extending into the future.

Environmental management is directed towards achieving a number of objectives. Basic among the objectives of environmental management is improved human life quality. It involves the mobilization of resources and the use of government to administer the use of both natural and economic goods and services. It is based on the principles of ecology. It uses systems analysis and conflict resolution to distribute the costs and benefits of development activities throughout the affected populations and seeks to protect the activities of development from natural hazards (Krutilla and Fisher 1975:292). The achievement of environmental management objectives should not be state centric in nature. Though the federal government of Nigeria as the custodian of the Niger Delta people need to design political ecological policy that targets effective environmental management in the region. But then, contributing to the improvement of citizens living conditions in the region is not only the responsibility of the Nigerian government. Multinational Corporations involve in oil exploration in the region are also making much fortunes which they are expatriating to contribute to the transformations of their mother nations. Therefore, such transnational corporations as part of their corporate social responsibility should and must be willing to show interest in improving the living conditions of lives in their hosting communities. They must also be partners in the management of the environment of their host communities. This they can ensure through effective waste disposal system. Proper disposal of waste is part of what Neumann (2005:122) considered as environmental management system.

Environmental management system as EPA (2013:1) confirmed is a set of processes and practices that enable an organization to reduce its environmental impacts and increase its environmental goals through consistent control of its operations. Environmental management system Gastl (2009:119) submits embodies the followings:

1. The management of an organization's environmental programs in a comprehensive, systematic, planned and documented manner. It includes the organizational structure, planning and resources for developing, implementing and maintaining policy for environmental protection.
2. A tool or process to improve environmental performance and information mainly design, pollution control and waste minimization, training, reporting to top management, and the setting of goals.
3. Provides a systematic way of managing an organizational affairs.
4. Give orders and consistency for organizations to address environmental concerns through the allocation of resources, assignment of responsibility and ongoing evaluation of practices, procedures and processes.

Multinational oil companies like Exxon Mobile, Shell, Chevron, Total, Elf, etc. are deeply involve in oil exploration in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Their level of waste disposal system is not favoring the people of their hosting communities in any way. The organizations commitment to the development of persons and infrastructures in the region is not also encouraging. Instead of actively participating in environmental management and community development service provision, some of these organizations prefer to deal with the elites and politicians at Abuja by sidelining the community members-development that often triggers attacks on oil facilities, kidnaping of foreign oil workers and demanding for ransoms as well as the demand for resource control in the region.

4. Resource Control

The history of the Niger Delta is characterized by agitation for resource control. After the abolition of slave trade in 1807, local traders engaged in resource control struggles to participate actively in the trade in oil palm. Similarly, resource control was one of the highlights of the Ijaws representation to the Willink Commission to Enquire into the Fears of the Minorities and the Means of Allaying Them in 1957. Resource control struggles in the post-crude oil era that began with the botched Boro-led attempt to create the Niger Delta Republic in 1966 has culminated in contemporary oil-related restiveness in the region. Since the Ijaw representatives failed to achieve their desired results to be left out of independent Nigeria, or, alternatively have a state created, subsequent resource control struggles have suffered a similar fate. However, the Ijaws' argument that the peculiar problems of those living in the creeks and the swamps of the delta were not understood and indeed were deliberately neglected by both the regional and federal governments remain true till date and feeds into the resource control struggle (Ako 2012:1, 2011:42, 2009:53 and Human Rights Watch 1999:92). Although, for political and sentimental reasons, many especially from other regions of the country may not be willing to accept the view that communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have reasons to complain or demand for resource control. Their demands for control of the resources of their region at all times they have emerged were ignited by reasons which the Nigerian government could have avoided. Sending well equipped and armed forces to thwart efforts of armless groups demanding for improve conditions of living or be given the right to control their natural resources as often adopted by the Nigerian government is an indication that the government is not in any way sympathetic with the conditions of the people of the region. But then, this does not in any way call for taking up of arms against the Nigerian government. An institutional method of achieving this aim offers a good alternative than taking up arms against the central government.

Resource control has always been an emotional and vexed

political issue in Nigeria since independence. In today's terms the debate centers on how the multi Billion Dollars Oil Revenue should be apportioned between the oil producing states and the Federation Government in Abuja? Add to this debate ethnicity, religion, perceived notions of marginalization, lack of alternative sources of hard currency, regionalism (Iyobhebhe 2011:1), and politics help in fueling the demand for resource control in Nigeria. In addition to these, leadership problem which the country is going through especially in relations to state inability to deliver good governance at the community level help in worsening the conditions of life of the people of the region. Demand for resource control to me is ignited by provocation in reaction to perceived negligence by the government. In some other cases, several arguments have been advanced in relations to Nigerian federalism as the main cause of marginalization which is resulting in occasional demand for resource control in the Niger Delta region of the country. Federalism is contextual. The Nigerian type of federal system is the type that give federal government exclusive power over issues like petroleum which is the main source of the nation's foreign earnings. Those who are pointing at federalism as a system where federated union control their resources and pay taxes or royalties to the central government are actually pointing at the fiscal type of federalism, which is not actually the Nigerian type of federalism.

Nigerian federalism as Arowolo (2011:83) observed was designed to reflect and sustain what could be described as centralism. This to him, is a situation that makes other component units subservient to and reliant on the federal government even on critical issues of development and age-long neglect. Dissatisfied with the ways resources are being allocated, the Niger Delta region according to him embarked on the agitation and struggle for control of its resources. In addition to system of government practice by Nigeria, some other group of intellectuals would want to blame the periodic demand for resource control in the Niger Delta region of the country on poor leadership than on the nation's brand of federalism. Poor governance incubated by greediness and corruption on the part of the political leadership which have always resulted in little attention to infrastructural development and improve living conditions of the people is the major cause of demand for resource control in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. A situation where political elites far away at Abuja display affluence and gratify senses in the open while citizens in the communities where the source of the wealth is produce do not have water to drink will not actually auger well for the government at Abuja.

The issue of resource control has so much to do with the failure of leadership in the country. Successive Nigerian leaders ignored or failed to resolve substantive national issues. Each time they were confronted with a serious issues, they would, push it aside or threaten to use force to stop the matter from being discussed or resolved amicably (Torulagha 2011:1). This is the attitude of the Nigerian

political elites. Thwarting oppositions and lawful demand of rights with repression and military force has been the activities of the Nigerian government in the Niger Delta region. If not for the amnesty projects and improve derivation formula adopted in favor of the region, confrontations would have still be on in the region between the Nigerian government forces and militants demanding for resource control in the region. The issue may be dormant for now but it has not been settled. The federal government must not allow the resting issue to rise before it settle it. At the point the issue got to its peak in the previous years, the country's crude production capacity was altered taking it to a second position in oil production after Angola. This also affected the nation's foreign earnings during the period of the heat of the militancy demanding for resource control. Political elites waiting to benefits from the demand for resource control do not see anything wrong with this demand. Their perceptions of resource control are in favor of their interests but not of the ordinary citizens of the region.

Resource control is the control and management of resources by state or local governments from whose jurisdictions the resources are extracted, is key to the emergence of a modern federal Nigeria. The states or local governments would manage the resources from their territories under federal guidelines (especially environmental ones), and then remit taxes to the federal center. Resource control will accelerate the process of development, by forcing the states and local governments, with allocation from the center greatly reduced or non-existent, to develop the resources within their jurisdiction in other to survive. Every state has something. They just have not been given the motivation to explore their riches. The need to survive, in the face of limited or zero allocation, would prove ample incentive (Henryik 2009:10). Resources as the Henryik (2009:10) stated are control and managed by both state and local government in federalism with fiscal arrangement structure. Under such system, the center depend on taxes remitted to it by the federated unions for the development and management of central services like defense and international affairs among others. This arrangement does not hold water tight in Nigeria's federal system. The Nigerian federal arrangement is total corporative federalism where resources found in any part of the federating units will be extracted under the guidance and ownership of the central government and the revenue generated from its sale distributed among the federating unions under the principle of derivation and advantageous formula in favor of the unit that produces the commodity or resources extracted. This is the situation in Nigerian federalism. Greater percentage of the revenue generated from crude oil by the central government goes to the states and local governments in the Niger Delta region under the principle of derivation. If the commodity is produce in regions other than the Niger Delta, the same formula will still apply is distributing the earnings from the commodity-for Nigerian brand of federalism is not fiscal in operation.

Resource control is the practice of federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their rights to primary control the natural resources within their borders and make agreed contribution towards the maintenance of common services of the government at the center. This dogma is not true in its entirety as the individual and not the state is the final repository of this General Will. The benefits of resource control according to Chief Obafemi Awolowo should accrue to the individuals and not the state following the principles finally expatiated upon by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 (Dafinone 2001:1). This just concluded view again, relates with the one given by Henryik (2009:10). The both views conceptualized resource control as part of federal system practice that give the right of ownership and management of resources to the individual but not the state. They have both in their positions be unable to accept and explain the point relating to the type of federalism Nigeria is practicing as a single united nation of multiple federated unions. Awo may have submitted that the benefit of resource control accrue to the individual. The reason behind this point could also be different from what Henryik (2009:10) and Dafinone (2001:1) have depended on. In situations where both state and the individual control resources, the essence of these controls is that the final beneficiaries are the citizens. Both government and resources are for the benefits of the citizens. These benefits, the state exist to safeguard and protect. Nigerian federal government controlling and managing resources in the Niger Delta region of the country is in defense of the type of federal system practice by the country. The custodian of the resources is one important issue. But then, additional matter is not the central government's control and management of the resources. It is that of how well the government at the center is utilizing returns from the sale of the commodity in the areas of environmental management, infrastructural development and improve conditions of livings of the citizens in the region that produces this commodity? The question of whether the returns from the sale of the commodity is judiciously utilized in the areas stated above is an issue that can hardly be ascertained.

Government has often loudly maintained its position as promoter of effective environmental management, infrastructural development and human transformation in the Niger Delta region of the country. These positions, the people of the region have always refuted. Change, experience has confirmed does not come easily. Ameliorating the environmental problem in the Niger Delta region as well as improving living conditions in the area is not going to be a single day job. It requires time. Both the people and government have to understand the reality in this point. Formulating policies on environmental management in the region and not implementing them to the latter will not facilitate change in the region. Age long reactions to poor environmental management measures in the region themselves are message of how unsatisfied the people are with the level of government attention to the situations in the

region. From experience, lessons that are emanating are reflections of the people's level of satisfaction with government involvement in the development of the region.

5. Lessons of Experience

Lessons emanating from experiences in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria signifies that the people of the region are not only furious but they are highly hopeless in the federal government of Nigeria as an authority that is truly willing to tackle environmental degradation problem or improve their condition of living and develop infrastructures to further strengthen the economic growth of their region. The assumptions of the people of the region is that the authority at Abuja is only interested in how much monetary values accrue from the sale of crude oil produce in the region than the development of the region. Reactions to perceive marginalization, neglects in the area of infrastructural development as well as poor living condition of the people of the region have triggered unwelcome development which themselves are retrogressive lessons and experience to the Nigerian government and people.

In Nigeria, our age long experience have shown us that the Niger Delta region is the center piece of Nigeria's economy. Whatever affects the region negatively translate in drawback to the nation's economy. Before presidential amnesty project was able to bring out the boys from the creeks to shun militancy and embrace dialogue, Nigerians were already conversant with the damages this struggle in the region has caused to the nation's foreign earnings. This affected negatively, government expenditure and funding of social development across the country to some extent. Delay in monthly subventions to state and local governments sets in as a result of shrink in petro-dollars earnings. The nation's production target of 2 million barrels on daily basis shrank and its position as the largest producer of the commodity in Africa dwindled between first and second positions with Angola. Other port activities from which revenues are generated especially import and export duties were also affected. Militants fighting under the guise of ethnics in request for proper environmental management by the central government or control of the resources of their region blamed Abuja as the cause of this antagonism. Lessons of these experience are unforgettable in the socio-economic and political histories of Nigeria.

It was still in this same region that the demands for proper environmental management or resource control graduated into militancy that cost several innocent citizens their lives and properties. Repressive approach adopted by the Nigerian government and resistant stand taken by the militants resulted in destructions of social and basic amenities which were even at shortage in several communities in the region. Several citizens were displaced by this confrontations and some others lost not only their belongings but also their lives. This created a serious humanitarian situations in the region

and till date, some of the grossly affected persons are yet to be rehabilitated till date. A number of communities in the region were razed down to rubbles by aggrieved government forces as a sort of transfer of aggression conducts for been taken unaware by the militants in their adopted tactics of hit and run offensive. The case of Odi community in Bayelsa state is a good example. The lessons learnt from this bloody confrontation in defense of national interest by the federal forces and struggles for resource control, improve condition of living and better environmental management by the militants are indeed bitter experience for all Nigerian citizens throughout the country. Domestic economy was shattered and inflation started setting into the system as a result of inadequate distribution of petroleum products throughout the country. Initially controlled long queues in filling stations resurfaced even worse than before. In addition to dysfunctional petro-chemical refineries at the major cities of Kaduna, Port Harcourt and Warri, earlier arrangement of exporting crude abroad, refined and bring in refined products for consumption of the Nigerian people was also affected due to insecurity in the region-a development that result in the largest producer of crude oil in Africa (Nigeria) importing same commodity to satisfy domestic demand.

Bitter experience incubated by insecurity promoted by demand for improve environmental management or resource control in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is one of the lessons that will continue to linger on the minds of the Nigerian people. The entire region became vulnerable to number of attacks promoted by high sea Pirates. The region became avenue for illegal light arm dealers to smuggle arms into the country and make blood fortunes. Destructions of oil pipelines and facilities escalated thereby resulting in shortage of the products throughout the country. Kidnappings of foreign expatriates rose, demand for ransoms to sustain procurements of arms increased, oil theft rose beyond imaginations, the waters of Nigeria and the nation portion of the Gulf of Guinea became harbinger and route for trafficking's of persons and drugs. Coastal ports of Nigeria became condoned with sympathetic experience and lessons relating to fall in revenue as a result of drop age in economic activities especially in importation and exportation of commodities, goods and services. Hinterland regions of the country also got a bitter experience and lesson from this development-for some of the ports they depend on for importations are in the Niger Delta region of the country. Internal and domestic market and trade system of Nigeria was also affected. Internal revenue earnings fall because of problem connected with the fear of mobility of persons, commodities, goods and services from and to the troubled Niger Delta region.

The fact that central government political ecological policy considered ineffective in ameliorating environmental problem in the Niger Delta region of the country contributed to the call for resource control and later militancy in the region, Nigerians experienced a limitation to their freedom of living, working and movement in all parts of the country.

The Niger Delta region because of its then volatility to militancy, kidnaps or hostage taking was a no going area to Nigerians from other regions of the country. Job lost set in because foreign investments were folding up as their workers are preys to kidnappers. Further inflow of direct foreign investments were also hampered. And the resultant lessons learned from these experience became abject poverty and collapse of available basic amenities and infrastructures-a situation that itself aggravated the sufferings of the people of the region. Civil liberty groups which were initially in the vanguard of helping people in the region to press home their demand of forcing the authority at Abuja to adopt improve environmental management policy and improve living conditions of people in the region quickly pulled out on realizing that the issue was graduating from mere demand for resource control to full blown militancy.

Lessons of experience from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria regarding to environmental degradation, demand for resource control, militancy and government response to these development are bitter. Although current situations in the region may not be that of violent per say. This to me does not however mean that situations in the region have normalized in any way. The nation's central government is currently headed by one of the sons from the region and as such the people may to me not be willing to promote pressure that can destabilize a government headed by their own son. The Niger Delta question to me has not yet been answered by the central government of Nigeria. If giving the people of the region autonomy to the control of the resources of their region is not possible because of the type and system of federalism Nigeria is practicing then the federal government should take total responsibility for environmental management, development of infrastructures and improving the living conditions of people in the region. The authority at Abuja has on different occasion defends its position of trying in the area of environmental management, infrastructural development and improving living conditions of people in this oil rich region of Nigeria. But the best of these efforts is yet to be seen till now. Not addressing the issue of the Niger Delta region once and for all to me is like the federal government is sitting on a time bomb that can explode in the near future to come or delaying what it must come to do with time. Majority of the indigenous workers in oil companies operating in the region are from the other parts of the country while majority of the people of the people of the communities hosting the oil companies are jobless. Several of the oil wells and consignments belong to people from the other parts of the country while elites from the producing communities do not have wells and consignments of oil produce in their communities. Lagos in the south-west and Abuja in the north-central regions of Nigeria boast of fly overs, bridges and modern infrastructures developed with revenue earned from sale of crude oil produce in the Niger Delta region while the communities that produce the commodity do not even have such infrastructures. Oil revenue has been used to dualize the federal highways from

Lagos to Ibadan, Benin City down to Asaba and from Lokoja to Abuja, Kaduna, and Kano up to Maiduguri as well as from Abuja to Keffi while several communities that produce the oil are inaccessible due to lack of motor able roads. The system has already been consolidated upon an unjust foundation. Rolling it back will not auger well for the nation because those benefiting from the injustice would not only cry foul but would want to put forward a resistant to such attempt towards change just to protect their age long interests. Over hauling it is not going to be too easy because a lot of sacrifices are required and patience towards sacrifice are not parts of the orientations the Nigerian people are groomed with. Therefore, what is the alternative solution or way forward to the problem of environmental management and restive demand for resource control in the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria?

6. The Way Forward

The way forward in ameliorating the ecological problem of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria embodies a number of alternatives which include environmental education and awareness raising. The panacea to environmental and ecological problem is not state centric in nature. The federal government of Nigeria must demonstrate its willingness and commitment in the area of involving the people of the region in ameliorating the environmental problem of their region. Organizations operating in the region must be willing to also participate in tackling the environmental problem of the region. Participating in environmental protection and ecological conservation in the region is far beyond corporate social responsibility and the will to commit fund towards improve condition of living in the region. Organizations operating in the region especially oil exploration outfits and the people of the region must be educated on the significant of effective environmental protection and management as well as how to translate knowledge acquired in these directions into actions. The federal government of Nigeria through its ecological and environmental protection policies must also in its various approaches adopts measures that shows the level of its willingness to educate the people of the region and organizations operating there on the essentiality on involving them in the management and protection of the environment of the region through educating oil exploration companies and creating awareness among the people of the region on the need for such task. The region is a home to the people and oil companies operating there make fortunes and profits which they expatriate for further reinvestment and development of the metropolitan states. The region serve the interests of the duo and the federal government that also make huge amount of its revenue from the region. Therefore, the benefiting partners are all parties in the management of environment in the region as well as ecological protection in the region. The people of the region and oil companies should be educated and made aware of their role and how

they can deliver such role in the ecological and environmental management of the region.

Complains of oil spillage killing aquatic animals offshore in the region are high. But then, the onshore damages by similar reason are also much. In addition to atmospheric pollution of air, green house emission of gasses that are contaminating available oxygen for both animal and plant consumptions and improper waste disposal systems by oil companies are inflicting serious damages and harms on the onshore portion of the region-development that is translating in loss of farming land and poisoning of drinking water in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Integrated onshore management to me will be an alternative solution to this problem. Onshore management system that will result in multi sectorial funding of onshore management through the commitment of funds for this purpose or the contributions of expertise as well as community participation in this process would go a long way in solving the environmental and ecological problem of this region of Nigeria. Government, private companies as well as the people of the region must not only be concern in theory or feelings about the ecological and environmental problem of the region. They must be willing to in practice and through actions integrate their possible efforts in the direction of tackling the environmental situation in the region. Through its policies, the Nigerian government can demonstrate its willingness towards this end. Companies can do so through corporate social responsibility and effective waste management system and the people of the region can demonstrate their own commitment in the area of community efforts, group work and the principle of self-help.

Organizations especially oil producing companies must not only be educated on the need to participate in the management of environment in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. They must not only be educated and made aware of this need. But must as a matter of must and state policy be made to adopt improve waste management system. How companies dispose the waste they generate from their productions in the region should be considered as important issue. Improve organization waste management system should be adopted as state environmental and ecological policy which operating companies must follow in their areas of operation or host communities. Disposing waste recklessly to damage farmland or pollute water and air should not be tolerated by the Nigerian government. Operating organizations should be made to understand this fact. Operating in line with improve waste management system should be made a condition they must not only accept must sign as part of the requirements to operate in the region. Violation of this condition, they should be made to understand will not be treated with impunity by the government of Nigeria. It should involve stiffer penalties like revoking of operating license and monetary compensation to both the hosting community and the federal government of Nigeria.

The Nigerian government should adopt political

ecological policies that address environmental complains. Mobilizing or redeploying forces and troops to demolish communities or thwart possible efforts demanding for improve environmental condition and management by the people is never an alternative or way forward in ameliorating environmental problem in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The cases of Nigerian government forces brutality at Odi oil producing community in Bayelsa state as well as the apprehension, kangaroo trial and hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa a human right activist demanding for improve environmental conditions and living standard for the people of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria are still fresh on the minds of the Nigerian people. Environmental complains of the people of the region should be address through institutional measures and processes rather than with repression and use of fierce force. Although OMPADEC failed woefully as a government institution set up by the Nigerian state to address environmental complains and improve conditions of living in the region. NDDC and Ministry for Niger Delta now exist. But the truth of the matter is that these institutions are more committed to human development than infrastructural development and tackling of environmental complains and matters. NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta need to strategize in the areas of infrastructural development and addressing environmental complaints or else, they will also die following the direction of OMPADEC.

Environmental workshops are effective measures for solving environmental problem in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Sending public and private officials as well as individuals from oil producing communities to workshops on environment will serve as an effective way out of the problem of environment in this region of Nigeria. Funds for these sponsorships to the stated conference should be made available by the government and oil companies operating in the region. Well-meaning citizens can also participate in this process as part of their philanthropic and humanitarian service to the people. Conferences on environment can be attended both at home in Nigeria or abroad outside the country. Participants for the stated conference should be drawn from both the oil producing communities and companies operating in the region. Government officials working in the area of environmental protection and ecological conservation should be part of the participants to be chosen and send for the stated conference and workshops on environment. Advance environmental protection measures and modern ecological conservation methods can be learned by participants from this type of workshops on environment. And knowledge acquired from this sections and trainings can be utilize in the area of environmental protection and management in the Niger Delta region of the country.

Another way forward for the environmental and ecological problem in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is for the federal government of Nigeria to come up with an effective corporate social responsibility policy that will ensure that companies operating in the oil producing

communities contribute certain percentage of their annual profits after tax to the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner. Operating companies should be compelled to as a matter of must commit part of their profits to the development of services like water, electricity, schools, hospitals, roads, housing and transportation among other services in the oil producing communities. These contributions to service provision should be sustained as a long term project and exercise so as to improve not only the quality and standard of infrastructures in the region but to also improve the living conditions of the people of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This will result in low rate of destitution, illiteracy level will drop, poverty rate will also fall and the level of frustration that is driven the people into militancy and demanding for resource control in the region will also reduce. Companies involve in oil exploration in the region must in addition to developing social services be prepare to create places of employment in their organizations for people of oil producing communities. This will create a sense of belonging in them and also show how concern such companies are in improving the standard of living in the communities. In addition to the promotion of effective social corporate responsibility, government at the three levels of authority in Nigeria must be prepare to sink their wealth in the area social service development in the Niger Delta region of the country. Federal, state and local governments must as a matter of priority be willing to commit certain percentage of their funds to the development of social services in the oil producing communities of the region. Funding life improvement services and conditions like in the health, education, water resources, electricity, housing and poverty eradication among others will help a lot in ameliorating the tension and constant demand for resource control in the region.

Promoting community participation in environmental management system is another good way forward and out of the ecological menace that the Niger Delta region of the country is suffering from. Federal government of Nigeria's environmental management policies should be designed to promote community participation in environmental management system. Communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria should be involved in the management of their own environment as well. This can be done through the introduction of integrated and multiple management system where community members will be given the right and permission to play active role in both environmental protection and ecological conservation in the region. On individual basis and at community level, oil producing communities can involve themselves in tree planting exercise. They can also organize community onshore clean up exercise periodically with funds and supports made available by both themselves and the companies operating in the region. These measures will lead to both effective environmental management and ecological conservation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

7. Conclusions

Political ecology of environmental management and resource control in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria examines government environmental management and ecological conservation policy as it affect the oil producing communities in the country. The Nigerian government policy on environmental management and ecological conservation in the region may be well articulated and designed in theory. But complaints arising from the region signifies that the Nigerian government policy is not translating in effective environmental management and ecological conservation in the region. The age-long grievances on the minds of the people of the region incubated by water and air pollution, soil fertility destruction, death of aquatic animal as a result of oil spillage, poverty, unemployment as well as acute shortage of social and basic amenities are often the causes of militancy, constant demand for resource control, piracy and other forms of youth restiveness the region is suffering from. Developing social services, promoting community participation in environmental management in the region as well as effective social corporate responsibility policy are part of the alternative solutions considered in this essay as the way forward in the problem of environmental management and resource control in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

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