

## Vandalization of Oil Pipelines in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria and Poverty: An Overview

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### Abstract

The paper highlights pipeline vandalization and how it affects the oil communities in the Niger Delta, her food production and most importantly is the environmental effects of oil exploration in terms of the socio economy of the people, this paper focuses on how vandalization of pipeline as a manifestation of poverty in the Niger Delta. The act of destroying or bursting of oil pipelines in Niger Delta region is as a result of underdevelopment and fatal negligence of the well fare of the people by the federal and state government, oil pollution which occurs in the form of water contamination through oil spillage which results in very low fish catch, considering that this region has lost her farmland because of environmental; degradation through oil exploration, and oil exploitation. As a result of the complete neglect of these communities, poverty has become endemic in the Niger-Delta and its manifestation is in the incessant vandalization of oil pipelines, the various fire incidence that occurred at Jesse, 1998, Ovirri court 2000, others and their aftermath. Lastly, there is an attempt by this paper to state the federal government palliative programmes like OMPADEC and most recently, the Niger Delta Development commission (NDDC).

**Key words:** Vandalization; Oil pipeline; Poverty; Niger Delta

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### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is the largest oil producer in Africa and the eleventh largest producer in the World, the main stay of Nigeria economy is the petroleum sector.

The Niger Delta region has an area of over twenty eight thousand square kilometers, the Niger Delta area has as part of its features, and meandering waterways. A large part of the area consists of salt water swamp parts of the fresh water further inland have limited agricultural possibilities, the region derived the name (Niger Delta) from being situated at the mouth of the River, Niger, which could be traced back to early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Comprising the people of the region are the Ijaws (who form the largest ethnic group in the areas, the Itsekiri, Urohobos, Efiks, Ibibios and other smaller ethnic groups.

Before the creation of the Nigerian state, economic activities of the Niger Delta in pre-colonial days entailed mainly export of salt and fish to its hinterlands. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when slave trade was at its peak, the region was West Africa's largest slave exporting area, and this was enhanced by its nearness to the sea. Slave dealers, however, diverted the palm oil trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when slave trade declined.

The colonial era gave birth to Nigeria, with the Niger Delta situated at the Southern-Eastern part of the country. As at 1975, three states were under the region namely Rivers, Bendel, and Cross River states, with two Igbp states, Anambra and Imo as the hinterland following the creation of more states and a redefinition of the areas to be included in the Niger Delta states were Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers state.

### Origin

Petroleum came from the Greek word *petra* that is from rock and also from the latin word *oleum* that is oil. crude oil is a natural liquid that consist of a complex mixture of hydro carbon of various molecular weights and other

liquid organic compound that are found in geologic formation beneath the earth's surface.

Petroleum is used in manufacturing a wide variety of materials and it is estimated that the world consumes about 88 million barrels of petroleum daily. The use of fossil fuel such as petroleum can have a negative impact on the earth's biosphere as it releases pollutants and greenhouse gases into the air and damages ecosystems through events such as oil spills.

### **Discovery of Oil**

Discovering crude oil in Oloibiri (in present day Bayelsa state) in 1956 brought a new phase of life to the people of Niger Delta. Oil was, subsequently, soon discovered in other parts of the region like Isoko and Warri in Delta and Eket in Akwa Ibom state. In the wake of the discovery, the region attracted foreign investors and economic advancement of the country. Currently, about 2 million barrels per day of Nigeria's total crude oil output is produced from the Niger Delta.

Though the discovery has brought a great deal of prosperity to Nigeria's economy, the benefit of the production and exploitation of oil has remained elusive to Niger Deltas whose land the oil is found. Development of the area since it started pumping wealth into the nation has not been much. The rural areas remain, till date, very much backward and underdeveloped. Besides, the sparse development in some of the areas was mainly for the companies' own interest, and was never intended to make life better for the people. Reaping the benefits of this very expensive resource are the foreign multinational oil business dealers—Shell, Mobil, ELF, Agip, Texaco, Chevron and their contractor companies but even at that, they do not appear to appreciate their host communities; it is troubling to note the high number of unemployed qualified applicants from the region; oil companies operating in the area have not extended employment opportunities to indigenes who are assigned to such menial tasks like cleaning up spills. While wallowing in nothingness and poverty, environmental hazards also pose many dangers to the existence of the people. Polluted air and sources of water supply and destruction of farmlands have helped to increase mortality rate in the area. Moreover, lives have been lost in fire explosions caused by spills and leakage of oil pipelines. In addition to wanton crisis and killing of the people while protesting against the injustices they receive.

On the whole, the advent of oil business in Nigeria, has not really brought with it laughter or joy or material satisfaction, to the people of Niger Delta. Instead it came with a high degradation of the Niger Delta environment, with concomitant poverty, crisis and killings.

### **Consequences of the Discovery of Oil and Gas**

Their environment poses a serious problem. The process of extracting and processing crude oil has caused much pollution of the air, water and land. Fishing activities

have been disturbed by oil spill accidents, which tend to occur rather frequently. Farming activities have also been impeded because of untold damages caused by oil drilling and spills. The damages have not been on farmlands alone but on forests and the fresh waters of the region, which are contaminated by crude oil waste dumped into them and the frequent spills.

The story of Isoko land, for instance, is a tale of frustration. Oil was found in Isoko (Uzere) in 1956 and commercial drilling commenced in 1958. Uzere oil well had a combined capacity of about 120,000 barrels per day 6p.d. Despite this contribution, Isoko land, nevertheless, for forty years has known only devastation. An ancestral lake in the land called Eni, which years before provided fish for the indigenes' consumption and a source of income is presently lifeless due to oil spill. Farmlands have grown weeds that have supplanted food crops.

Otugwe IK, an Ijaw village in Bayelsa state, tells another story of environmental abuse. In June 1998, a 16-inch underground shell pipeline burst, discharging about 800,000 barrels of oil into the area. The spill has poisoned the community's water supply and fishing ponds and is steadily killing the raffia palms that have been the community's economic mainstay. Lacking any other alternative, the people of the community have had to drink polluted water for over a year. This resulted in many people contracting life-threatening diseases and myriad deaths as to the cause of the spill, Shell would not be held responsible. Instead, it has alleged that the spill was caused by sabotage and has refused to pay compensation in any form.

Eyama-Elleme in Ogoni land has been suffering from a poisoned stream that is their main source of drinking water and fishing and its entire downstream waterway system. The poisoned waters are as a result of a spill in the late 1960s of a shell pipeline in the village. The spill caused a fire explosion in which a vast area was buried under a rock-hard crust of burnt oil many feet thick. The spill, which was untreated because Shell refused to take responsibility for it leaked crude oil into the ground water and nearby stream. Digging wells to provide water has proved futile, as several privately dug wells have had to be abandoned after dangerous high levels of pollution were found in them.

In November 1998, a fire disaster caused by the leakage of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) pipeline gulped almost the whole of Jesse community in Edo state, claiming many lives, hundreds of people were also injured in the disaster. The Nigerian government as the major operators of the corporation, refused to be faulted for the pipeline leakage. Victims of the inferno did not receive needed compensation or aid and allegation of sabotage and threats to arrest people (even among the victims) believed to be the saboteurs was the experience of the people.

**POVERTY:** No doubt, the oil boom has guaranteed large revenue for Nigeria and such income realized have been the funding source for the development of the country's capital cities or seat of power (not located in the Niger Delta). As well selfish governments have, in their successive turns, enriched their personal purses with a considerable part of the revenue accruing to the nation from crude oil production and export. While the Nigerian government based in the profits of the very lucrative venture, the people from whose land the crude oil is extracted and produced are forgotten. Government, it seems, has not Made any active sustaining policy geared towards alleviating the sufferings of oil producing communities.

Oil prospecting companies in the area exist in opposing end with the people. While the management of the known companies enjoys good living conditions (which include use of electricity, health care, good water supply etc.), their host communities have no access to such basic amenities. What 'good' community relations the companies claim they maintain is evidenced in the deplorable state of their most communities and the pronounced absence of good living amongst the people. The oil companies have a great vacuum yet to be filled in the areas of their social responsibilities to the host communities.

For the people in oil communities of Niger Delta, their continued poor living condition has caused been many discontentment with the Nigerian State.

### Government

Perhaps what hurts the Niger Deltan people more is the attitude of the Nigerian government towards them, the silence and diplomatic guise it maintains despite the glaring impoverishment of the people. It is more an attitude of neglect and indifference. The former civilian president Olusegun Obasanjo was accused of being the genesis of the Niger Delta problems. As military Head of state in 1978, Obasanjo enacted the land use Decree, which transferred ownership of all lands (including mineral resources found in them) to the state, meaning that landowners lost control of their lands to government. He is also responsible for scrapping the derivation formula approving a paltry one-percent for oil mineral producing states. When Alhaji Shehu Shagari took over from him, he increased the share of the area from oil revenue to 1.5 percent that was still too small. By 1985, General Ibrahim Babangida who was at the helm of affairs increased the allocation to 3 percent, in 1987 and set allocation to 3 percent in 1987 and set up the oil mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). The concept, though good, was destroyed by the appointment of a board of cronies to man the commission. On the derivation formula, when the Obasanjo civilian administration took over in May 1999, it was the hope of oil and mineral producing communities and Niger Deltans generally that

the one-percent derivation principle (which made their income from the minerals they produce so meager) would be reviewed. According to the constitution. Yet some public officials viewed the minimum 13 percent as being too small. About 25 percent were argued for. An opinion maker commenting on genuine development of the area from its state of socio-economic barrenness, suggested that "to become truly self reliant and competitive, the states of the region will need no less than 50 percent of the yearly revenue Nigeria gets from resources there" (The Niger Delta). However, on April 7, 2000 president Obasanjo endorsed the principle. Though a commended gesture notable Nigerians and public officers demanded arrears of the fund to be paid. Payment they argued should have commenced from May 29, 1999, that was when the constitution became effective.

The Obasanjo civilian administration had promised to give more attention to the Niger Delta and its oil mineral producing areas. In a bid to achieve its plans for the Niger Delta, a Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) bill was proposed by the Executive arm in July 1999. The proposed bill was however surrounded by a lot of controversy. Initial reaction from civil rights organizations in the region and the people was of rejection of the bill. They posited that it was a lame duck in disguise. Besides, the provisions of the bill were not satisfactory in that it did not address all areas of their needs which include the vital issue of the control of resources not the poor allocation of the percentage of revenue accruing to the region. Like the South-south people conference, opposed the nine-member states provided in the bill maintaining that they should be six, which should include Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states. Subjects of controversy in the bill also included method of funding, tax payment, constitution of its governing council and location of its headquarters. The latter was zoned to Rivers state amidst disagreement.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria in recent years has evolved through crisis of instability especially in oil-bearing communities that are agitating for environmental protection and fair share of the oil wealth generation from their area. Infact, from Okoloba to Ogidigben, Ogbotobe to Bonny, Ogonni to Iko, Gbaran to Obagi, Umuechem to Peremabiri, from Egbema to Edagber, etc violent protest have become a frequently occurring phenomenon.

Studies on the oil industry have shown increasing concern for the effects of exploration and production (EP) on the environment. For instances, oil spills operational mishap or international damage to facilities cause considerable damage to the environment.

Evidence show that vast areas of territorial and aquatic vegetation have been decimated and marine life for which the vegetation provide a life support system has largely disappeared with the vegetation Okoko and Ibaba (1998). Most contention issues have centered on the payment of

inadequate compensation for the damages, creation of job opportunity for the youths of the areas, delays in the assessment of the affected area, failure to provide relief materials and the non-provision of development projects to compensate for the damages done to the environments.

This has presented itself as the subject of discontent in the relationship between the oil communities and the oil companies okoko and Ibadan (1998). Thus, the oil bearing and the oil producer companies are constantly in a conflict, which threaten the economy and stability of the Nation at large.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

The major aim of this paper is to examine the problems of connected with persistent communal disturbance in the Niger Delta, as regards Oil spillage vandalization of equipment and pipelines by unidentified people in relation to the manifestation of poverty in the Niger Delta, government determined to curb the crisis in the Niger Delta, set up Niger Delta Development; Commission (NDDC) to examine in detail the problem facing Niger Delta in her oil web, their occupations their manifest of poverty, the reasons why they are poor, the programmes government had embarked upon to remedy poverty in this area, the reason for their failure and the way forward. They examine critically the roles of NNPC, towards the development of Niger Delta, as a result of pipeline vandalization and oil spillage. Also the numbers of lives and properties lost and the implication of pipeline vandalization in the Niger Delta.

## ECOLOGY AND IT'S IMPORTANCE

Petroleum activities and process has brought in their trail numerous devastating environment incidents that have upset ecological balance, stunted communal food chain and also shrank generation future of the Niger Delta. oil exploration and exploitation over the cost four decades have impacted most disastrously on the socio-physical environment of the Niger Delta. Oil bearing communities massively threatening their fragile subsistent peasant economy and biodiversity and hence, their entire social livelihood and very survival.

All phase of petroleum exploration and production produce environmental effects of grave consequences. In course of oil exploration, drill mud and fluids are barites and bentonitic clays that affect plant growth when dumped on the ground. The usual remedy lies in natural process development of new topsoil of bioremediation. These materials are also harmful in water to button-living plants and animals (FEADI NWANKWO (1988).

The greatest environmental danger starring in the face is ground water pollution in the Niger Delta is pathetic oil field pollution presents the greatest risk from the oil industry.

Group water is further contaminated by liquid from surface impoundments or spills from storage tanks, pipelines, improperly closed or abandoned oil well and poorly constructed injection well (EKPI, 1995), groundwater in the port Harcourt area had maximum permissible figure of 0.1 mg/l recommended by world health organization (WHO).

Nigeria holds the worst associated gas-flaring record in the whole world. Niger Delta estimated 12, million tons of meter per year recording, according to World Bank report (1995). The most eloquent bane of petroleum activities is spillage.

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE NIGER DELTA

Fishing is the main occupation of the people in Niger Delta. Another aspect of economic activities in Niger Delta is the occupation of vandalization of pipelines. The fishing and oil pipeline Vandals techniques are varies and include nearly all the basic material need for oil pipeline vandalization and the fishing methods. They have materials fishing mechanization methods, but in areas of vandalization of pipeline as a manifestation of poverty in Niger Delta draw us back for colonialism and imperialism.

The group who engage in oil pipeline vandalization and fishing activities are highly knowledgeable of the system used for damaging the pipeline line and availabilities of cells taped and numbers of fishes cached per day. This is just explaining the problem of poverty and its manifestation in Niger Delta communities.

## THE EFFECT OF OIL PIPELINE VANDALIZATION AND EXPLORATION

This include freshwater pollution, air pollution, chemical pollution, soil pollution,, soil and land pollution, degradation, industrial pollution oil and gas pollution, urbanization and unsustainable domestic, waste management, unsustainable agricultural practice such as fish farming, malnutrition and disease freshwater shortages, habitant and ecological systems loss and insecurity. (Exotic species extinction, wildlife, fisheries and biodiversity depletion, hunger, rural and urban poverty due to food shortages and insecurity and resulting from pollution-contamination and genetic loss, flooding and coastal erosion sedimentation and situation, land subsidence. Lack of community participation, noise pollution, community environmental and population health problem conflicts within communities and between host communities and operating companies. Weak of nonexistence environmental laws and regulations, food contamination, threatened and endangered fisheries and wildlife. The rating of these major environmental problems, social issues and priorities.

The implications of Niger Delta environmental problems as poverty, food security, fisheries and hydro biological ecosystems of the Niger Delta beyond local importance and national relevance to meet internal standards. It directs incidence to the human and industrial dimension of sustainable development is a fundamental focus of development and agricultural economics as well as the conservation of bio-diversity in marine/coastal ecosystems.

### **Pollution of Water**

The water heavily polluted by domestic sewage, effluents from industrial, trash and offal's, heat. Pollution of water in the area is largely, responsible for the incidence of water-borne disease such as typhoid, cholera, bacillary, dysentery, river blindness and guinea worm infection. Offshore oil exploration has cause consideration pollution of water in the region in the loss of liquid plants and animals and the contamination of water bodies. The contamination of rivers of the Niger Delta through the spillage of crude oil or petroleum products is alarming. Between 1976, and 1990 about 3,000 oil spill incidents were reported by the oil companies operating in this country. Within this period over 2 million barrels of oil spilled into Nigeria's terrestrial coastal and offshore marine environments.

### **Land Pollution in the Niger Delta**

The land surface of the Niger Delta has been degraded through misuse of the oil by poor agricultural practices. Oil exploration industrial waste dumping and indiscriminate disposal of urban waste.

Oil spillage through petroleum production has changed the character of the land in the Niger Delta polluting it to the detriment of living organisms. Such spillage is responsible for the destruction of crops, farms, vegetation and wildlife, it also impairs human wealth.

### **Sabotage**

Out of sheer greed and ignorance (perhaps, more of the latter) some inhabitant of the Niger Delta have resorted to the cutting of flow lines and tampering with the facilities of the oil companies operating in the area. This act of sabotage leads to oil spillage and gas leaks. The saboteurs engage in this practices to enrich themselves or "punish" the oil producing companies as a way to compel them to pay compensation to the oil producing communities. The consequences of such act of sabotage are unimaginable, as the damage it does to the environment is beyond compensation.

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## **OIL SPILLAGE AND COMMUNITY DISTURBANCE**

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A topical issue haunting the contemporary Nigerian Nation is the problem of instability in the Niger Delta

area. At the center of the crisis is the oil producing communities and the oil companies who are engaged in a conflictual relationship, enveloped by palpable hatred. A major cause of conflict in the Niger Delta is oil spillages, resulting from the (EP) activities of the oil companies.

Indeed, oil spillage now feature prominently in the conflictual relationship between the (SPDC) and the oil producing communities not only because of its attendant devastation of the environment (the sources of livelihood inclusive) and the ecosystem generally, but perhaps more menacing is the ever increasing rate of spillage's and the volumes of crude oil spillage.

Thus, for example in the western division of the SPDC alone, a total of 1006 spillage's were recorded between 1983 and 1996 in 46 oil field Jetty terminal involving 54, 872, 18 volumes spilled (BBLS) in addition to the 171 case of sabotage induced spillage involving 9, 584, 225 (BBLS) recorded in the same period. Not surprisingly, on their part, the communities have charge the companies of insensitivity centered on the payment of inadequate compensation, delay in the clean up of spilled oil.

Delay in the assessment of impacted area and the payment of compensation, failure to pay compensation, under the preference of sabotage the short changing of chemical, the destruction of economic crop. Farmlands and fishing grounds and the failure to provide relief materials in times of spillage's.

These issues have caused demonstrations at Otuasega, Odidi, Oloibiri, Akanfa. Oporoma, Rukpoku, Uzene, Bonny, Ogoni, Egbema, Biseni, Kula Olugboboro, Peremabiri to mention but few. In all these, the (SPDC) has been a major target apparently because of its large operating area. Thus for example in January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1993, the people of Ogoni in River State embarked on a protest to express concern over their environment. The complain on their environment has been systematically destroyed by the oil companies which in collusion with successive Nigeria government have been stealing their natural resources oil, without the people getting commensurate compensation for their loses-unproductive farm lands, polluted waters and general environmental degradation. The event, which followed this protest are well known and clearly do not need any elaboration here. Similarly, on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> march, 1995, about 1,000 women from Apelegebene community warri south local government area of Delta State, took over the SPDC, Odidi II oil field for ten days. The women were protesting the destruction of their economic crops by an oil spillage in their area. Such demonstration or protests have occurred in several other oil producing communities for similar reasons. In response to these demonstration and accusations, SPDC, has dismissed them as either unnecessary or uniform. However, available evidence proved the contrary.

GAIUS OBASEKI NNPC BOSS stated that, Niger Delta is recording at coast 4,835 incidents of environ-

mental degradation resulting from the spillage of 2.4 millions barrels of oil have been reported in the Niger Delta region between 1976 and 1996. more so, Ray Ekpu, journalist and member, governing council of the national human right commission who disclosed this fact while presenting a paper on "Environmental Degradation, oil installation, vandalization of pipeline, responsibilities of oil companies to the host communities a human right issues" at the women Auditorium in Yenagoa, said the figures emanate from available records (INDEPENDENT MONITOR, 2002, p.8).

The Ogbodo Isiokpo community in Ikwere local government Area of River state, where the June 25 oil spill of shell petroleum Development company (SPDC) occurred has reported strange ailment among its people, which they said, had claimed four (4) lives. Hoham disclosed tat about 7,000 barrels of crude oil had been salvaged from the damage, and expressed shell's regret and concern over the incident (south-south express, 2001, p.8). About 7 people injured in gas explosion in central savajero on Monday (South-South Express July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2001, p.8).

There is a communal conflict (war) in Niger Delta over oil money(South-South Express, 2001, front page) another pipeline leakage's half fuel distribution in the country (Vanguard, 1998). Another pipeline explosion at cross River state about seven (7) persons reported death toll (THE PUNCH, 2000, p.27). Nevertheless, the Lagos state government has demanded a sum of 900 million compensation from Mobil oil Nigeria PLC on behalf of victim of oil spillage in Riverine communities in the state.

(THE PUNCH, 2000, p.5) It is quite understandable, that oil firms is fond of deceiving oil hosting and Delta communities on her abundant natural resources in her area base (INDEPENDENT MONITOR, 2001, front page).

Dr. Kinse A.B. Okoko Ijaw National congress president (INC) has cashed at distractors of the Niger Delta cause now a topical issue of contention in Nigeria. He declared," I have a focus for the Niger Delta cause, and nobody can succeed to distract me from that focus, I'm aware of some people working to derail my cause they are only wasting their time. He said, go and tell (them) that they can't derail my cause for the Ijaws, and the Niger Delta people. Furthermore, I have a focus and I know my focus. They are only wasting their time". He posited (Environment Watch, 2000). Another in calabar (THE TIDE, 2001).

Mrs.Uzo Egbuche addressing oil spills in the Niger Delta. She stated in addition to environmental degradation due to oil exploration and exploitation related activities, soils, erosion, and has been a major cause of loss agricultural productivity and human displacement in many parts of Nigeria. She also stated that, the center for environmental resources and sustainable ecosystem is promoting the use of bioremediation for poverty alleviation and to combat oil spill in the Niger Delta (ENVIRONMENT WATCH, 2000).

As a result of the youth restiveness of the communities in the Niger Delta arising out of the severe damage and degradation to these communities. The oil companies have been obliged and infact extra lied (and sometimes, the reprimanded) to contribute either directly in the Niger Delta oil times July 2000.

## PIPELINE VANDALIZATION IN THE NIGER DELTA

Pipeline vandalization is a big issue, which has extended into explosion at site where villages in oil communities converge to scoop fuel from burst pipes. Figure by the special committees on fuel distribution show an alarming increase over the past years. Ninety-three cases of rupture and vandalization were recorded by the pipeline and products marketing company in 1993. it increased to 49 in 1996, 45 in 1997, soared to 81 1998 524 in 1999, and spelled to 800 for the half of 2000. Death toll hits 310 in Monday pipeline victim in Adeje, near Warri, Delta state, and the additional victim, earlier rushed to herbal homes for treatment have been reported dead; about twenty, other bodies were recovered in nearby bushes. No fewer than 250 persons were said to have been consumed in the inferno which occurred while the villagers were scooping fuel from the 12-inch pipeline conveying fuel from Warri to the Northern part of the country allegedly vandalized.

Sunday by hoodlums. News of the death of the 40 additional victims came as more bodies of victims were recovered and given instant mass burial at various spots in Oviru court and Adeje communities. Investigation revealed that no fewer than 20 bodies of victims who ran into the bust in an attempt to stay alive were recovered (NATIOANAL CONCORD, 2000).

As though determined to wipe out the entire people of the surrounding communities, vandals returned to the burst pipeline of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) at Egborde near warri scene of Monday's fire tragedy in which many died, again scooping fuel thus resulting in another fire out break (THE GUARDIAN, 2000). There appears to be a major. breakthrough in the search for oil pipeline vandals as detectives allegedly implicated six (6) naval officers in the vandalization of pipeline in the Ojo local government area of Lagos state (DAILY TIME, 2000). It is pertinent to note that, about (2) two persons were killed, oil company clash in Eket local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

(DAILY TIME, 2000) The presidency has ordered the police to short-at -sight anybody found vandalizing oil pipelines. The NNPC was forced to contact the IGP, who in turn alerted the presidency, "because the level of damage to our pipeline is worrisome". No doubt, vandalization is our greatest problem. For every "link-break" is vandalized. It costs the NNPC between N1.2 million and N1.6 million to repair, "the chief lamented".

He said the NNPC was alarmed when recently; vandal damaged several line breaks along the Osun Rivers spanning about four meters in which. He said it cost the NNPC 120 million to effect the repairs of the explosions. The most disturbing threat to regular supply and distribution of petroleum products to the Nigeria populace and economy is the unwholesome and deliberate act of vandalization of he pipelines by unpatriotic citizens. The act of vandalization is committed by drilling a whole thereon, "the perpetrators of the act then install sophistication gadgets on the drilled hole to facilitate the siphoning and stealing of petroleum products (NOW, 2001).

The group-managing director (GMD) of the Nigeria national petroleum corporation (NNPC), Engr. Jackson Gaius-Obaseki, gave an assurance that his corporation would not prosecute any victim of the Oviricourt disaster. He appealed to victims of the Oviricourt and Ijula-Ifia still in hiding, to come out for treatment, saying that to the survivors (THE TIDE, 2000). The NNPC appealed to communities through which pipeline passed to resist the attempt of collaborating with pipeline-bursting cartels for their own good. He further explained that apart from environmental devastation occasioned by vandalization of oil installation, pipeline explosion released dangerous gases into the air that are capable of causing various ailments. Obaseki stated that, the NNPC would intensify effort to provide more pipeline logistic for the special task force set up to secure oil pipeline in the Niger-Delta (THE TIDE, 2000). During the year 1974, several shortage of petroleum products became noticeable for the first time. Leading to unusually long queues at petrol stations, both all the hanky panky that went with it situation is still very much with us today. The government being conscious of the negative consequence of this set up a high-powered committee to ascertain the root cause of the fuel shortages, a factor that was to lead to the latter day vandalization of oil pipelines and other installations. The committee, according to Ayanbanji, traced the cause of product shortages or what has become known as fuel scarcity to "inadequate local refining capacity, inadequate storage capacity and inadequate distribution facilities". As immediate solution to these lapses, some 5,000 kilometers of multi-product and crude oil pipeline interlink four refineries and 22 other depot locations nation wide were awarded to prospective contractors. This heavy investment in refineries, pipeline and storage depots (DAILY TIME, 2000).

Once again Anyanbanji tries to give an explanation to this when he recounts: "At the inception of Nigerian pipeline network in the late 1970's and early 80's damage to petroleum products pipelines with a motive to steal was very rare. Pipeline ruptures through human agents witnessed in the 80's and early 90's, were according to him mostly accidental.

They often occurred when heavy earth moving equipment such as excavators and diggers accidentally damaged

the during road construction". But in 1994, first recovered its ugly head. "following the presidential election of June 12, 1993, the petroleum workers view embarked upon a nation wide strike action to back their demand for actualization of the result of that election. There was a prolonged and serious fuel scarcity nationwide. Vandals and other miscreants capitalized on the fuel society and embarked upon pipeline vandalization as a means of flooding the market with cheap fuel. Petroleum products were siphoned from line break points and sold cheaply to willing buyers". Such unpatriotic member of the public made a lot of money at expense of the nation's economy and at a cost in human lives as it happened in Jesse community in Delta state.

So, there is now what one can call a political dimension to pipeline vandalization. The vandalization syndrome took a different turn in 1998. "The restive youth of Niger Delta, while protesting the total neglect and underdevelopment of their area, resorted deliberately to vandalization of the NNPC pipeline and setting them ablaze. Although such action can in no way be justified, however, it depicts the level of frustration and abuse the people have been subjected in the past probably until now that their plight has attracted the attention of government at "the highest level", therefore, the incalculable damage to life, property, the national economy and environment is widespread and multifarious. Take for example the Jesse petroleum fire outbreak of 1998 which resulted in the death of over 1,000 people, while several houses were burnt and many other persons lost their livelihood.

Again, there was the Oviricourt fire outbreak of July, 2000 resulting also from oil pipeline vandalization, which took away over three hundred lives and properties worth millions of naira. The entire Niger Delta region has been thrown into a psychological state of palpable fear. This is also true of some areas of the south-East, people live in fear and there is anxiety that explosion could occur at any point in time which could result in timely death. Simply put, life has become short and brutish in the oil producing areas. Where pipeline vandalization has become a passion of social miscreants and the mentality of war. (Daily Time, 2000) such mindless acts inevitably lead to pollution of farmlands, rivers, wells and creeks, as farmlands are rendered useless for agriculture as a result of being saturated with hydrocarbons. Fishes die in the water, denying fishermen of means of livelihood. Potable water resources are polluted, livestock die, thereby affecting seriously the economic and social life of the host communities. (Daily Time, 2000) For the NNPC, foreign oil companies and the government, there are huge losses in infrastructure. In 1999 alone, the loss in fuel due to pipeline vandalization was due 3.0 billion while a billion was lost by way of material and equipment employed in fire fighting and repair to vandalized pipeline. In the first half of the year 2000 alone, NNPC has lost over 3.5 billion worth of fuel to pipeline vandalization.

## **Vandalization of Oil Pipelines as a Manifestation of Poverty in the Niger Delta**

Despite being one of most prevalent social phenomena in the history of man, poverty issues remains ubiquitous. Thus evoking several at time conflicting interpretations. Poverty refers to the absence of lack of material wealth or life below subsistence. Some Nations have been advanced that, tend to explain it's meaning and empirical manifestations as to whether poverty can ever be eradicated? Mark Anikpo (1995, p.8) refers to these as fallacies of poverty.

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## **POVERTY AND VANDALIZATION**

The term poverty remains one of the socials phenomenal in an environment of man. Poverty may arise through exploitation degradation and vandalization of man environmental and its resource. These issues of man in his environment may be classified to the Niger Delta in general. Niger Delta in its natural resource has the problem of environmental degradation and exploitation and the total neglect by the Nigeria Government.

The Business Eye 19 to 25 May, 2008. Vandalization of pipeline is as a result of poverty, no job opportunities and the neglect of oil producing areas, and exploitation of their environment. Pipeline breaks and vandalization have resulted in high loss of lives and property and threat to national security.

Post Express, 1991, p.11, 19. The problem of environmental devastation; vandalization exploitation, degradation, is thus twinned with the problem of underdevelopment. And no other people that realizes this better than the Niger Delta farmer and fishermen. More than any other organization environmental right action has chronicled and documented in graph terms. The social environmental and natural consequences of oil production on the inhabitants of the area. It bears repeating, if for nothing else, to serve as a reminder to those who aspire to lead Nigeria in the new millennium what little opposition still remains in the area. They killed and plundered and the stars did not blink.

They razed down Ogoni and hanged her finest and the Nigerian sun shone ever more brightly. They nailed trauma to the cross and Nigeria's leaders sang the Halleluja chorus whom then to fear?

In the Niger Delta, the fisherman, the tiller of the soil, and ordinary folk who walk hard and bath in the creeks and breath, the airs of the atmosphere is the barometer with which the health of the environment is measured. And what their loud, anguished cries say to us is that their land is dying. They do not only know it. They feel it live it. Consider the statistics that Nigeria is the world leader in gas flaring, the gas-related pollution generated in the Niger Delta alone is greater than that produce by the household in great Britain.

According to the distinguished British environmentalist

and writer, Andrew Rowell, some 35 million tone of Co<sub>2</sub> and 12 million tone of methane are produced by gas flaring.

Up to 76 percent of gas is flared in Nigeria companies to 0.6 in the USA and 4.3 in the united kingdom. But even more frightening is the prediction backed by rigorous scientific analysis, that given that subsidence is occurring in the Niger Delta as a result of production. While as the same land, which the communities presently inhabit, will be wipe away, and 80 percent of the population forced to relocate as we enter the new millennium. It is estimated that the total loss on immovable property will exceed 9 billion of dollars (Post Express, 1999, p.10, 19).

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## **LAND, OIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE NIGER DELTA**

The land use decree promulgated by the military government of General Olusegun Obasanjo in March 1978, remains one of the most controversial legislation ever made in Nigeria. The law vested all land in Nigeria in the state, with "all land comprised in the territory of each state (except land vested in the Federal Government of its agencies) solely in the Governor of the state, who would hold such land in trust for the people".

As a result, the State Governor now has the responsibility "for allocation of land in all urban areas to individual's resident in the state and to organization for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes which similar powers with respect to non-urban area are conferred to on the local governments".

Legal experts describe the law as one of the most ambiguous laws ever made. "If there be any award for bad drafting, the draftsman of the land use Act will easily win the first price".

Dr. Ademola Poppola, observed a few years ago that many years after the enactment of the law, "it is a notorious fact that ... the Bench, Bar and academic community are still battling to unravel the mystery of its interpretation and operation".

Judicial interpretation of different sections, words and phrases used in the land used Act have resulted in long draw out and bitter legal battles, often going as far as to the supreme court, notes the constitutional Right project, CRP. Equally: Odious are the arbitrary powers in the decree regarding issues such as grant and revocation of rights of occupancy, the quantum of damages payable by government for compulsorily acquiring lands, designation of lands as urban or non-urban, the duration of a certificate of occupancy and so on, determine capriciously and without any objective criteria. The result is that the power to determine these issue are often abused to the detriment of citizens, and one may add, communities.

The supreme court in the case of NWKOCHA vs. governor of Anambra state and others decided that. The tenor of the Act as a single piece of legislation is the nationalization of all land in the country by the vesting of

its ownership in the state leaving the private individual with an interest in land which is the only right protected in his favour, by law after the promulgation of the Act. This makes the problem a more difficult one and as such a rather National structural problem rather than an ethnic problem that can be resolved by an individual or community as the case may be.

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## OIL AS POVERTY NIGHT MARE

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This paper is all about poverty of children, of women, and of those in rural oil producing communities of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, where the oil that feed the rest of Nigeria is extracted from. It has become evidently clear in the region, that as the poorest are pushed to the edge, the impact is most severe on the youngest and the most vulnerable. It is frightening to note that acute poverty in the Niger Delta region results in the deaths of thousands of children under school age. These deaths results from the combination of malnutrition and preventable diseases like tetanus, measles, whooping cough, acute diarrhea, acute respiratory, infections and malaria. Children in this part, who live past school age, face the hazards of abandonment, or the early necessity of full-time work to support themselves or contribute to their family income.

One result is an appalling increase in the number of children living on the street. Prostitution among young girls is rampant, whom rich oil workers (black and whites) seek out in the belief that they are likely to be free of infection. Most of these girls exchanged sex for gifts, mainly of clothing, school fees and support for their very large family members.

Children remain the most vulnerable victims in the cycle of poverty, dependent on forces beyond their control-poor family, neglected community and economic factors for the provision of food, education, health, and shelter. Children are the foundation of tomorrow's Nigeria, and their needs, which are possible here but are criminally denied them should not be ignored or given peripheral attention by both government and multinational oil extracting corporation who has not only milled their environment dry, but are polluting them to death. It is centrally important to deal with them today. What neglect and abandonment has done to children in the Nigeria Delta region, it first did to their mothers and fathers.

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## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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It is established fact that oil exploitation, vandalization and poverty in the Niger Delta has resulted in environmental degradation, economic impoverishment and cultural destabilization. The people of the Niger Delta and their communities have been reduced to scavengers in midst of their wealth.

We can also understand that the problem facing the people of Niger Delta communities, the problem of unemployment, lack of health facilities road and the means of transportation. Again it is both sad and unfortunate that successive governments who have rules the country have more often than not treated the Niger Delta area as a colony fit only for what can be taken out of it from this background. It is important that something urgent must be done to alleviate the pains, suffering and the agony of the people of Niger Delta. One thing is clear, men cannot live his life to the fullest potential in a degraded environment, on this not we therefore, concluded by adopting, one Article 24 of the Africa charter of human and people's Rights which state that. "All people shall have a right to a generally satisfactory environmental favorable to the development".

This African charter is superior to all military decree and all other legislature by any particular member state of the organization of African unity (OAU) which is now known as African union (AU) and as such, Nigeria has other rational optional but to implement contents of this charter.

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