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**ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
(A STUDY OF THE NIGER - DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA)**

A terra incognita

EINGEREICHT VON:

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Chapter I: General Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

The field of social ethics is more and more being challenged with the problems of the environment especially with growing concerns in many African countries which has witnessed unprecedented upsurges in and intensification of environmental related problems and the pursuit of economic growth which in its present form, has become an end in itself, no longer serving the welfare of its citizens nor for human survival or the preservation of the African natural environment. So the articulation of the African environmental concerns requires from the field of social ethics a systematic and critical approach.

Like many other troubled-spots in Africa, the resurgence of environmental-related problems in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and its closely related issue of sustainability in the face of conflicts has also provoked keen interest among scholars of social ethics, researchers and environmental practitioners. Indeed, investigating the Niger Delta has become a major and scholarly enterprise among the academia. The environment of the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria, - the focus of my study, - has been an area of violent conflict pitching the rural citizens of the region against the Nigerian government and the multinational oil companies over issues of environmental degradation, bad governance and political disenfranchisement, all as a result of natural resource control and long years of crude oil exploration and exploitation in the Delta. Since the natural environment is seen as the symbol of reality of the existentiality among the micro-ethnic clans and communities of the Niger Delta region, the area has also continually experienced a long tradition of intra-ethnic hostilities against one another over access to and control of socio-economic, political, and more still the oil-endowed environment of the region. This has assumed a large scale and to a proportion that raises fundamental socio-ethical questions over the security of lives and properties, good governance and the threats to the stability of the Nigerian state. Thus, African scholars (more still Nigerians) and social ethicists are faced with enormous tasks. They are called to reflect the ways in which the oil economic adjustment has impacted on the environmental and socio-politics of this region of Nigeria. An African social ethicist in the face of environmental problems in the Niger Delta is also faced with giving an answer to how the worsening conflicts over environmental resources could be resolved for the

good of the citizens and for the sustainable development of the Nigerian society as a whole.

1.2. Stating the problem

My research work on environmental problems and sustainable development as it pertains to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is underlined by my personal reflection on the many years of substantial oil production in Nigeria and on the fact that there is only but very little results in sustainable socio-economic, political and perhaps human development in the country. The poverty rate in Nigeria is extremely high;¹ the national, environmental, political, educational and social infrastructure is in a desolate condition, and the nation is marked by chronic internal instability and periodic flare-ups of violent conflict.

Slightly adjusting the immediate point above from a socio-ethical view point, however, would reveal that oil related environmental pollution, extreme poverty, high levels of youth unemployment, bad governance, perceived discriminatory employment practices against local communities by oil companies and socio-economic and political marginalization and neglects of the citizens by the Nigerian politicians constitute the main grievances of the people of the Niger Delta against the multinational oil companies and the government. These ethical questions have a long history connected to the view of the citizens in the Niger Delta that they are not given the opportunity to express their views about their future and the resources from their immediate environment by the government and the foreign oil multinational oil companies who exploit their region, take their lands and expose them to oil pollution and environmental degradation.

¹ United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP), Human Development Report, 2008; in: Mähler, A. Nigeria: A Prime Example of the Resource Curse? Revisiting the Oil-violence in the Niger Delta, German Institute for Global and Area Studies, (ed.), Hamburg, 2010, p.17, stated that: “according to the latest surveys, more than 50 percent of the population still lives on less than one dollar a day and more than 80 percent on less than two dollars a day. Furthermore, the increased oil revenues have not been used to substantially expand social and infrastructure expenditures. The Niger Delta is still characterised by completely insufficient access to health care, (drinking) water, and electric power; moreover, the housing situation has still not notably improved and is generally worse than in the rest of the country. All these aspects continue to be central factors in the dissatisfaction of the Niger Delta population and continue to an enhanced potential for the conflict.”

Taking advantage of the modern and surging wave of environmental awareness and a favorable understanding of citizens'² and minority rights, the citizens of the region have framed their problems, demands and protests in political and environmental terms. Furthermore, the conflicts that engulfed the oil Niger Delta are also indicative of mass revulsions against the prolonged intrusion of the military into governance and civic life in Nigeria, leading to the shrinking or outright collapse of the democratic space for popular social and political participation of the citizens. Again, the conventional wisdom is that the economic and political fortunes of the oil communities became progressively worse under military rule. As such, only a civilian democratic dispensation can reverse the trend and restore lost opportunities of the citizens. Nigerian Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) also reasoned along the above lines when it noted that:

“The growing incidents of unrest and disturbances in the Niger Delta are the result of lack of democracy and good governance. Democracy would have assured the participation of the people in determining how they are governed, and good governance would have ensured that the huge wealth derived from oil was deployed towards developing the area and preventing the current unrest now threatening peace and economic activities, including oil operations in the Niger Delta.”³

So articulating the Niger Delta conflicts from another perspective would show an integral but unique aspect of the larger pressure in support of a quick return to good governance and civil democratic rule. The centrality of the Niger Delta question to democratic stability and good governance is hinged on the fact that the resources from the region helped to maintain military regimes in power, while on the converse, it facilitated the termination such rules through persistent mass-based political mobilization and struggle.

The quest for good governance, wholeness and economic security has led the citizens of the region to seek the explanations for the causes of how huge natural resource endowments rather than brighten the prospects of their development, they remain poor, environmentally devastated and conflict ridden. So the picture that

² Die Bedeutung der Bürger ist insgesamt deutlich gewachsen. Ihre Haltung spielt in Zeiten täglicher Meinungsumfragen eine zunehmende Rolle. Sie beeinflussen schon damit viele Debatten und Entscheidungen. Aber nicht nur die Bevölkerung insgesamt, sondern auch die Meinung des Individuums hat heute ein größeres Gewicht. Gruppeninteressen dominieren nicht mehr zwangsläufig... Das zeigt das gestiegene Selbstbewusstsein der Menschen, es ist aber auch ein deutliches Signal, dass sie in der Demokratie eine aktivere Rolle einnehmen wollen. Cf. Thielen, G., in: Change- Das Magazin der Bertelsmann Stiftung, Schlautmann K., (ed.), 9, 2/2011, p.54.

³ Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), Land, Oil and Human rights in Nigeria's Delta Region, Lagos, 1999, pp.36-37.

emerges in the region is clearly one in which resource wealth is subversive of sustainable development process.

In my own view, all these factors form the basis of an authentic discourse of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria relating to its environment and problems within the field of social ethics. As a general case, my study on the environmental problems in the Niger Delta begins by investigating the historical experiences of the people; how they understand their immediate environment and how they perceive their environmental scarcity and or opportunities and their reactions. What factors account for the resurgence of violent civil conflicts among the people? What factors condition the attitudes and reactions of the Nigerian government and the multinational oil companies to the environmental and violent crisis in the Delta? What are the ethical, immediate, short and long-term implications of, and solutions to the environmental and violent conflicts in the region? These and several other questions that are important to my study must be seen as socio-ethical problems which also require some socio-ethical answers.

1.3. Research Objectives

The objective of this work is founded on my own personal reflection on the environmental problems of the people living within remote African communities like the Niger Delta of Nigeria and how such problems they can affect their sustainable development. Then by bringing such environmental issues to the normative relevance of social ethics I tend to establish or challenge the reasons for such and their hindrance to political, social and economic development of such people (here people in the Niger Delta being the focal point).

In trying to rationalize and address these issues (from the ambient of social ethics), I may attempt to delving into the followings: How effective is the Nigerian legal and institutional machineries in managing environmental problems and how it be further be strengthened? How has the environmental problems in the region affected the sustainable development of the region and what road-map can be followed in resolving the conflict?

My aim of carrying out a research on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is not intended to undermine the importance of the other areas of Nigeria's threatened

environmental conflicts, but this is only to enable me as a social researcher to present the connection between oil exploitation, which is a great source of the problem of the people in the Niger Delta and the way, the character of the Nigerian state in resolving it. So my assignment here will be about formulating an ethical and pragmatic principle of a way forward, since they are issues that have to be addressed now, otherwise they portend danger, and have serious negative implications for the future for the citizens in the region. All these put together inevitably makes my study on environmental ethics and sustainable development among the Nigerian oil producing communities an important aspect of study within the field of Catholic social ethics especially as it concerns African societies.

Finally I will attempt to analyze a comprehensive and integrated view on the state of the Niger Delta environment and its relationship to the different actors and stakeholders (the local communities, the government and Multinational oil companies) involved in shaping it; presentation and promotion of specific lines of action aimed at preventing and remedying environmental pollution and degradation; highlighting the importance of environmental protection as an ethical imperative; better appreciation of the role of social ethics in the environmental debate and its agenda for sustainable development; improvement of an up-to-date information on the subject matter; and recommendation of specific areas for further study and research.

1.4. Methodology

My methodology of this thesis will be a simple and empirical fact-finding on the environmental problems in the Niger Delta and how such problems affect the development of the citizens of the region. Since my thesis relates to real-life phenomena, the analysis and evaluations will also be tailored in finding reasonable response to the practical needs of the citizens. As such I will trace the historical development of the problems, its socio-ethical implications and different responses and approaches by citizens and stakeholders in the region. The data I used here are mainly derived from sources like books and articles that deals on social ethics and issues pertaining to the environmental crisis in the Niger Delta.

1.5. Division of the Work

The immediate chapter of my work is principally devoted to critical and in-depth conceptual issues relating to the environment, the Niger Delta and the term sustainable development along the following thematic lines: The idea of the environment for the people within my 'study-context'; a deep analysis of the strategic importance of the rich oil lands of the Delta area and struggle for land control and ownership between the government/the multinational oil companies and local communities; an overview of the meaning of the term 'environment' by drawing up from the resources and ideas of Christian teachings and some encyclicals. The third chapter of my work titled: The politics of oil and the Nigerian state, articulates what role oil and its discovery in the Delta plays in the Nigerian state. It also explores the linkages between oil in the Niger Delta and violence involving the local communities and ethnic militias protesting against the government and the multinational oil companies. In what follows, I will in this chapter argue that while the crisis in the Niger Delta environment may be attributed to natural causes, the greater proportion of it is attributed to the activities of oil companies in the area (Shell as a case study), and also to the ways the Nigerian political powers and 'system' interact on the delicate ecology. I shall conclude this chapter by investigating the extent to which the factor of oil influences the occurrence of violence as well as other relative particular factors triggering environmental and social violence in the region and their specific interplay are also analyzed. In the fourth chapter of this work, I will make some socio-ethical reflection on the challenges facing all the stake-holders (the government, oil companies, and local communities) in Niger Delta society despite its environmental problems. In general, I am quite optimistic in my approach to environmental problems and development by believing the citizens of the Niger Delta can also on their own accord as individuals and as a society; build a future that is more prosperous, more just and more secure. This chapter tries to make an argument that the current way of working in the region cannot continue if the future is to be at all livable for the citizens. This chapter also emphasizes that to attain the objective of sustainable development for the Niger Delta there need to be basic administrative and human capacity, rule of law, readiness to dialogue among all the stakeholders, self-reliance and an intensified economic growth (especially educational and technical) which has become an absolute priority for the Niger Delta society. I will in the fifth chapter of this work present some further articulation socio-

ethical principles which will attempt to answer the question: what would be necessary for change to a more sustainable, peaceful, socially, politically and economically harmonious Niger Delta society? So this chapter presents a kind of overview and a general dynamics and mechanics for a Niger Delta society that will be sustainable. Further, this chapter provides for a deeper appreciation of the role of the civil societies and religious bodies especially on issues of human empowerment and poverty eradication, education and capacity building, clean environment and promotion of justice. The concluding part of this chapter presents a critical evaluation of the entire work, and projects a futuristic scenario of the Niger Delta especially within a politically and democratically stable Nigerian society.

Chapter II: Concepts of the Environment

2.1. What is the Environment?

The question of the environment problem (not counting out the environmental crisis in Niger Delta region of Nigeria) has become a prominent, but complex and multi-dimensional issue for philosophical, theological and social ethical studies and still more for public policy agenda of states and international organizations. This issue is in the modern studies perceived not simply as a narrow ecological problem of how to ensure a symbiotic and congruent inter-face between man and his environment. It is more than that. Its inner core has ethical, political, sociological and scientific ramifications, all which are anchored to the new understanding. From the socio-ethical dimension, environmental related problems and sustainable development challenges the social ethicist in a number of ways, but suffice to say that one which is so relevant to my study here is from the perspective of its effects on the people of Nigeria, and the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta in particular. The environment which can be situated within the ambient of applied social-ethics relates theories to practice, which means that our relationship to nature constitutes the foundation out of which ethical reflections departs. It also means that ethical theories are applied to these relationships, which sustainable development forms a key aspect of it.

One way of illustrating these challenges is to look upon environmental problems facing the oil producing communities of Nigeria as crossing a number of boundaries, which socio-ethical theory traditionally presupposed. An instance of such boundary is the boundary between the people who are presently living within this environment now, and those who will live there in future. The environmental problems militating against the development of the Niger Delta, forces my idea to analyze the socio-political significances of their lives and development and also for their future generations.

Suffice to state that people living within the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta may be somewhat better off in as much as fashioning traditional remedies to manage their environment and to enhance development, but the current environmental conflict, violence and militancy in the region has also become an issue for ethical, social and political concern. The oil spills, violent militant activities,

the neglects and incessant destruction of human lives and the environment in the Niger Delta has become a matter of concern not only for the people living within this cultural and geographical boundary but also for this research work in particular and for the students as well as researchers in the field of social ethics, so as to proffer theories and perhaps solutions for mankind in general.

The environmental problems as it relates the exploitation and exploration of oil in the Niger Delta are not simply scientific, technical, political or strategic questions. They are fundamentally ethical issues, because they are human-created and soluble problems that adversely affect the good of humans and other kinds in their relationships within the region. Environmental perspectives in the Delta assume ethical values, and they entail dispositions and actions that can be evaluated as ethically right or wrong. So the Niger Delta environmental problems then are ethical challenges which no scholarly work, person or group can responsibly ignore or neglect.

To elucidate my point of view more clearly, the term environment may simply refer to the aggregate of surrounding things, conditions or influences. In the general sense, it refers to the Earth system which surrounds man. Viewing this term from a wider perspective than the term *ecology* it can be understood as the complex of physical, chemical and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival.⁴ Furthermore, the term environment may be defined as “the sum total of all processes and domain in which the interaction between nature and human civilization takes place. ‘Environment’ per se encompasses all natural factors that influence or are influenced by human beings.”⁵ It is the total components of our ecological system, including the interactions therein and the changes that occur in it. From anthropological point of view, the environment can be termed as “the unit from which resources needed for ‘human’ development and sustenance are obtained and into which human development is directed.”⁶

⁴ Britannica Micropaedia, vol. 4. Chicago, 1994, p.512.

⁵ German Advisory Council on Global Change, World in Transition: Basic Structure of Global People-Environment Interactions, Annual Report, Bonn, 1993, p.9.

⁶ Cf. Dokun O. Essentials of Environmental Issues: The World and Nigeria in Perspective, Ibadan, 1995, p.3 (Dokun Oyeshola is a Professor of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Nigeria. He has special interest in environmental and sustainable development, human rights security issues and peace and conflict resolution.)

There has been for sometimes now a growing and general awareness not only among scholars and researchers but also among the citizens that Nigeria as a nation is immersed in an environmental crisis. While part of the crisis may be attributed to natural causes, the greater proportion of it is attributed to the activities of people, particularly the ways the economy and modes of power interact with man and his environment. In this sense therefore, issues such as land degradation, pollution, deforestation, poverty, urban decay and resource conflicts which underlie the Nigerian environmental crisis, reflect the contradictions thrown up by the social and political system. The resolution of these contradictions will define in my research the costs of the environmental problems in Nigerian especially within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

My research work which focuses on the exploitation of crude oil and its impact on sustainable development, the environment and the people will mainly centre on the urgency of good environment, particularly in the volatile Niger Delta area. Of particular interest is the upsurge of struggles for the advancement of human and environmental rights among the communities of the Niger Delta. The choice of the crisis of what can be termed 'environmental governance and sustainable development' in the oil-rich Niger Delta is not intended to disparage the importance of the other dimensions of Nigeria's threatened environment, but also to enable me to address the linkages between the exploitation of oil, which is a major source of environmental conflict in Nigeria, and the character of state-mediation and politics which is affecting sustainable development in the region.

My new concern for the people in this region is built around the need to balance the challenge of Nigerian development with the imperative for the sustainable exploitation of the environmental resources. This perspective bears in mind the existence of certain thresholds beyond which uncontrolled exploitation of resources would render recovery of the region and people or replenishment of renewable resources impossible.

The issue of the environment in the Niger Delta deals with relations of power that underlie the interaction between people and their environment and my research work is only out to investigate how conflicting relations, involving certain social forces that are struggling for the control over the environmental resources are mediated by the Nigerian state. To do this successfully requires a critical

understanding of how the Nigerian state deals with competing claims and entitlements, and manages the social responses to specific modes of extraction and degradation of environmental resources in the Delta.

Through the direct and indirect actions of the Nigerian government, relations of power over the environment result in the domination or exclusion of the host communities and greater emphasis is placed on state control of the environment for the benefit of corporate and private (as opposed to the public) interest. By the same logic, vulnerable Niger Delta communities are denied access to power and other resources and are often coerced by the state to bear the environmental cost of the accumulation process. So when I decided to research on the ethical implications of environmental degradation and governance in the Niger Delta, I come to realize that that the problem even transcends mere environmental management by the state. It even extends and forms parts of the dynamics of the entire process of development.

It must be emphasized however that the Nigerian state is a contested society where various social and political forces struggle for dominance and for access to power. The implication of the nature of the state for politics is that “power in Nigeria is invariably used for the accumulation of wealth, a perverse mode of accumulation of wealth which is dissociated from capitalist activity and government and governance is the spoil of war. There is for all practical purposes, no collective purpose and there is no collective enterprise including a national development project.”⁷ So the type of governance and democratic process in the Nigerian society- where the ruling class lives on the oil rent from the Niger Delta and dictate the pace of project of development- neither ethical environmental practices nor democratic considerations that will help sustainable development cannot be ethically accommodated nor accepted.

The oil rich Niger Delta region is therefore not just a region of struggle between the forces of unethical environmental practices and accumulation but also those of resistance. Local communities and human rights activists who resist unethical practices and accumulation in the oil industry are repressed by the state. At the same time they are made to suffer from environmental degradation and other consequences from the activities of the multinational oil companies.

⁷ Ake, C., *Development Strategy for Nigeria after the Structural Adjustment Programme*, Ibadan, 1996, pp. 3-4.

The approach of the issue of the Niger Delta environment should not be seen nor defined just in its narrow physical sense. A social construction of this environment depicts the contending interests that use and claim the environment. This social construction conceptualizes the environment as “a process rather than a form, as the result of a set of relationships between physical space, natural resources and a constantly changing pattern of economic forces.”⁸ It is this from my observation that defines the social forces that benefit, or lose from the exploitation and degradation of the environment in the Niger Delta, and the form and intensity of the struggles for access and equity by the rural Niger Delta communities. This idea only brings to the understanding the dialectics of the politics of the environment in the Niger Delta.

2.2. The Centrality of the Environment in the Niger Delta

In the general sense, the people living around the Niger Delta region⁹ just like other African people sees the environment as the ‘Earth system’ which surrounds them. They also view their environment as “the sum total of all processes and domain in which their interaction between nature and their history and civilization takes place.”¹⁰ So their environment then, encompasses all natural factors that influence or are influenced by human beings in the region. They see their environment as “the unit from which resources needed for their development and sustenance are obtained and into which their development is directed.”¹¹

Consequently, among the people of the Niger Delta communities, it is believed that the deities inhabit natural phenomena with which they daily associates with like rivers, forests, sky, or the sun. Their ancestors are believed to be around their

⁸ Redclift, M., *Sustaining Development: Contradictions*, London and New York, 1989, p.79.

⁹ Das Niger-Delta ist das größte Feuchtgebiet Afrikas und eines der ökologisch sensibelsten Gebiete Nigerias, das in seiner geologischen Struktur dem Mississippi-Delta gleicht. Seit der Teilung Südnigerias in eine Ost- und eine Westprovinz Ende der dreißiger Jahre gehörte das minoritätenvölkern besiedelte Delta zur Igbo-dominierten Ostregion. Die zahlenmäßig größte ethnische Minorität der Ijaw lebt im Küstenbereich mehrerer Bundesstaaten, während andere größere Minoritäten wie die Itsekiri, Urhobo und Edo das westliche Delta bevölkern.

Mittelgroße ethnische Minoritäten wie die Ogoni, Andoni und Ikwerre leben im zentralen, die Ibibio und Efik im östlichen Delta. Zahlenmäßig relevante Gemeinschaften des Igbo-Volkes leben in den Großstädten Port Harcourt, Warri, Sapele und an den nördlichen Rändern des Deltas. Heute liegt der Großteil des Niger-Deltas in den Bundesstaaten Abia, Bayelsa, Delta, Imo und Rivers, das von den Sedimenten der beiden wichtigsten Flüsse des Landes, Niger und Benue beständig gespeist, geformt und verändert wird. (Cf.: Bergstresser, H. *Nigeria. Macht und Ohnmacht am Gof von Guinea*, Frankfurt am Main, 2010, p. 26.

¹⁰ Ike, O., & Edozien-Nnoli, N., *Understanding Africa, Traditions and Reasoning*, Enugu, 2001, p.134. (Obiora Frances Ike is a Nigerian Professor of Social Ethics, History and African Studies).

¹¹ Cf. Dokun O, O.P. *Essentials of Environmental Issues: The World and Nigeria in Perspective*, Ibadan, 1995, p.3.

homes and huts, and take part in all-important family affairs. Spirits could possess men, and spirits sometimes incarnate themselves in visible objects. Through prayers and sacrifices, men influence the deities and the spirits. The deities, on the other hand, intervene in human affairs to bring good fortunes to their devotees and misfortunes if their laws are flouted.¹²

Harmony in nature according to these communities, leads to the mutual strengthening of the beings in nature and this by implications promotes life. This is why the people of this region seek a profound communion with their environment. As Ikenga-Metuh further narrated, “himself (man) is in intimate rapport and tries to maintain relationship with the animals, vegetable, and other elements and phenomena in nature. For him, the first evil is disintegration, for this would spell disaster both for himself and his immediate environment. The ideal thing is integration, communion and harmony.”¹³

The people of the Niger Delta, from their perception of nature and its ontological order are environmentally conscious and friendly. To relate to it otherwise is to threaten the harmony and integration of nature’s gifts and resources. And the deities according to the world-view of these ethnic communities have the responsibility to ‘police man’ so that the integration and harmony of the ontological order might be maintained. This is necessary so that the possibility of sustainable development and self-fulfilment are left open to as many people as possible, including future generation.

One of the most fundamental cultural, social and economic realities in the Niger Delta is also the basic understanding of the environment as a natural right and there with a human right, for the satisfaction and protection of the needs of their people, their families and their communities as a whole. In this traditional society, whatever natural resources the individual owns in his immediate environment (such as land, animals, plants etc.) was based more on the right of ‘access’ and ‘of use’ in a proximate but not ultimate sense. Among the people of these ethnic groups, natural resources relations were guided by a philosophy that supported the common good. As such, absolute ownership of land and gifts of nature was discouraged. This was

¹² Ikenga-Metuh, E., *God and Man in African Traditional Religion, A Case Study of the Igbo of Nigeria*, Enugu, 1999, p.69. (Edmund Ikenga-Metuh was a late Professor of African Religions, the head of department in the University of Jos Nigeria and a visiting scholar at Harvard University).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.71.

an important factor in ensuring the sustainable use and management of the environment especially for their cultural heritage and for future generations.

Since private ownership of the 'gifts of nature' was necessary for security, life and survival of the families in the Niger Delta, it was understood as a 'social mortgage', emphasizing the right of access to which every member of the community was entitled. This means that in the Niger Delta society, ownership of natural resources had intrinsically social function, which it has retained until date. The division of 'haves and have-nots' in the area was avoided by ensuring every member of the community has access to natural resources according to their need and entrepreneurial ability. The exclusive usurping of natural resources rights by a few lucky and corresponding marginalization and exploitation of the rest of the society was not possible. This ensured equity in economic affairs, since opportunity and access for all in the society was guaranteed.

But these communities' environment has also a global dimension. This global dimension can be seen as one in which economic and political players do relocate from any part of the world to the Niger Delta in search for profit. But this dimension of global environment has had its dialectics in the Niger Delta. It breeds local resistance by social forces that employ local and traditional environmental grievances to connect the rights struggle on the global stage.¹⁴ The Niger Delta region of Nigeria exposes the social forces struggling over the environment and how the social impact of oil exploration and exploitation in the region sharpens contradictions and deepens environmental conflict.

The issues of ownership, access, entitlements and rights, have characterized these conflicts, whose ramifications reverberate the local, national and global level. The conquest for power over the oil-rich environment lies at the heart of the ethical question of the on-going crisis and social conflicts in the Niger Delta.

¹⁴ Obi, C., Globalization and Environmental Conflicts in Africa, in: African Journal of Political Science, June 1999, Vol. 4, No. 1. (Cyril Obi, is an academician from the Niger Delta Nigeria, and senior researcher and leader of the Research Cluster on Conflict, Displacement, and Transformation at the Nordic African Institute (NAI) in University of Uppsala. He is also an expert on oil-related conflict in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta, oil politics, governance, and peace-building in Africa.)

2.3. The Environment- whose own?

The ownership of the environment (land and waters) in the Niger Delta is the ultimate question facing all stakeholders in the on-going environmental conflicts in the region. As I have earlier observed, land is critical for the culture and reproduction of the lives of the local people in these communities. But the indigenous owners of the Niger Delta environment whose survival is linked to fishing and working the land, and keeping it safe against pollution are pitched against the government and the multinational oil companies that claim the land in the region by virtue of their position and power and produce oil from the land. This oil-based accumulation is justified in the name of national development. Land tenure (the manner land is acquired, owned, used and transferred) is a complex issue in Nigeria. In the formal sphere, the government 'own' all land and has the power to make land available to individuals, groups, institutions and government for development. In all cases, once the government seeks land, it legally acquires such land, with or without paying compensation to its indigenous owners. In the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta, the situation is more explosive, partly because of land scarcity arising from the swampy environment and high population density. Due to the strategic importance of oil rich lands in the Delta area, most of oil-producing communities have lost the right to their own land to the government and the oil companies. The result has been that the people feel short-changed, while the orthodox and ethical avenues for redress remain virtually non-existent.

Furthermore, the factor in the politics of land ownership in the Niger Delta, also vests the ownership of all known oil deposits in the Nigerian state. By claiming ownership of all natural resources under the ground, and having the sole right to expropriate all such land in the public interest, the state asserts its own power over the environment in the oil producing communities, while simultaneously dispossessing those local communities of the land and disempowering them regarding any claim to the natural resources and other gifts of nature emanating from their environment. The main beneficiaries of such actions are state officials who control enormous power in the oil sector and the multinational oil companies who are licensed to exploit the rich oil reserves in the region. The local people who lose their land, either as a result of expropriation, or as a consequence of oil pollution or environmental degradation, end up with a mere pittance as compensation or nothing at all. This from my findings is what has induced multiple conflicts over rival claims to oil fields and arable land in

the Niger Delta. For the ethnic Niger Delta people, alienation of land by the state and oil companies strikes at the very basis of their culture and survival. Hence, the intensity of their struggle to reclaim the sanctity of their land and environment, and perhaps a fair share of the oil wealth produced from it.

The multiple and serious effects of oil-related environmental pollution in the Niger Delta- a host of physical and mental impairments among some of the people of the area, as well as comparable consequences for other species and their habitats- confirm that the situation in the Delta region is a major ethical problem. It demands some ethical solutions. If the solutions are to be commensurate with the problems, they almost certainly will require changes on how the government and the multinational oil companies assesses and control their 'economic greed' and sustainable patterns of the Niger Delta environment, the citizens and institutions. Environmental degradation and pollution affecting the people in the area are not matters of privacy or national sovereignty; they are serious ethical issues against human beings that demand public regulations and prohibitions.

Worthy to note in here is that the existing legal framework in Nigeria offers very little assistance as the common citizens are usually ignorant of the law, and lack the proper means to prove the extent of environmental damage. Competing environmental claims have become strident in the face of growing poverty in the Niger Delta. At the same time, the rewards for those who control the oil-rich region have increased, as have their unethical and violent means to defend their acts, and suppress competing claims. The people whose environment are degraded are repressed, impoverished and they have also lost faith in the state as the protector of their environment and the rights of all. This has resulted in the widespread of alienation and multiple conflicts, further worsening the crisis in the area.

But as the case may be, the basic cultures and traditions of the Niger Delta people in their understanding of nature abhors any immoral, unethical and unjust abuse and exploit of it; and at the same time, provides a unique set of ethical values and rules to guide human beings in their relationship with the environment.

2.4. Christianity and Encyclicals

2.4.1. Christian Teaching

The Christian faith, despite the historical ambiguities in its environmental credentials, has the impressive potential to become an indestructibly firm foundation for environmental models. Christian ethics contains all things necessary, all the values and ethical theories for the sustainability of the environment.

Christianity upholds that God is the 'Pantocrator'- the sole governor and final benefactor, the sovereign source of all being and becoming, the ultimate provider and universal proprietor, the originator and systematic organiser. All elements and inhabitants of this planet and solar system, and every planet and solar system, from the sun and moon to lakes and mountains, from protozoa to humans, are finite creatures – creations of God and finally dependent on God's providential preservation and parental care.¹⁵

The central Christian idea on nature and the environment is that, man shares and depends on the same world, with its finite and often non-renewable resources. The Christian doctrine also believes that this world belongs to God by creation, redemption and sustenance, and that he entrusted it to human-kind, made in his image and responsible to him; man is only in the position of steward, tenant, curator, trustee or guardian, whether or not he believes or acknowledges this responsibility. So man being the steward implies caring management, not selfish exploitation; it involves a concern for both present and future as well as mankind, and a recognition that the nature he manages has an interest in its own survival and well being independent of its value to man. Good stewardship for the Christian idea requires justice, truthfulness, sensitivity, and compassion. It has implications for individuals, organisations and states.¹⁶

The Christian bible also noted that creation (or nature) as seen today does not correspond to the original paradisiacal (the first and original creation of God) creation but to the situation after the Noah-flood with all its raptures, disharmonies and conflicts. So the Christian theology also teaches that man has and plays a double position in relationship to creation. On the one hand, man is a part and an

¹⁵ Nash, J.A. *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, Nashville, 1991, p. 95.

¹⁶ Attfield, R. *The Ethics of Global Environment*, Edinburgh, 1999, pp.47-48.

integral part of the created order; and on the other hand, he is empowered to utilize nature's gifts in a creative manner to assist his needs. But this authority of man over other fellow created beings goes with responsibility and care, following the injunction to 'cultivate and guard' (cf. Gen. 2, 15). This task shows the continued presence and work of God in creation. The injunction to keep the Sabbath holy for instance, sets a limit also to man's activity in relation to the environment. It is therefore very clear that the reckless exploitative and destructive tendencies of man in relation to the environment were from the beginning of time not permitted.¹⁷

In the New Testament of the Christian Bible, it views the natural world not only as a place where destructive powers, conflicts and sin are inherent, but also a place where Jesus Christ fulfilled his work of salvation and also a world where God's love and care are made manifest. Creation as a whole also shares in the final fulfilment at the end of time. The activities of man as it relates to other created things must also take into consideration that nature itself has its own intrinsic value and also a share in the redemptive act of Christ. So the New Testament encourages man to act in such a way as a participant and a follower of Christ marked with the sign of God's love and love of his neighbour. And automatically, from this command of love, flows the fundamental aspects of a responsible and care for the environment.¹⁸

The major and outstanding difference between nature that is finite and God who is infinite sets the world and its history and in fact man as a creature from the yoke of a putative divinity. God has no need of the world and its history, nor has the world or anything in it any divine claim. It makes no sense therefore, in the field of social ethics in regard of man's use of nature as a sinful act. But at the same time, man must see himself as a being in the midst of other living beings, and relate to them with goodwill. By so doing, he exhibits in a rational sense, God's will for man who left him a free and life-enhancing relater with nature. Man as a being among other beings is called to freedom but bound to responsibly care for creation. If man in an irresponsible manner plunders the environment, causes harm to himself by destroying nature, he is rejecting the partnership with God and creation. Since man is only a being among other beings in nature, there exists then a unifying bond between them which prohibits man from neither causing harm to other beings nor treating other beings as means to achieve his own aims. This means that the

¹⁷ Cf. Die deutschen Bischöfe, Handeln für die Zukunft der Schöpfung, Op. Cit. P.39.

¹⁸ Ibid. P. 41.

authority given to man over nature is not an absolute authority, but one that demands care, obligation and respect for the environment. So the basic Christian belief in nature can in essence be interpreted as one seeking to protect and discover the value and beauty of creation as a whole.

Stewardship of man to the environment does not only exhaust biblical approach to nature. There is yet a distinct tradition of the approach of co-operation with nature, in which the role of humanity is to perfect nature by co-operating with it. The idea that the creation was deliberately left incomplete with a view to challenge humanity to creativity and to scope for human improvements to nature also pervaded that early Christian thought. A good example is supplied by the Benedictine monasteries, who sought to enhance both the beauty and fertility of their lands. These Benedictine attempts to improve the land also form a constructive example of stewardship as a paradigm of environmental responsibility.¹⁹ From the analysis so far, it is clear that stewardship tradition, which I also recommend here for the Niger Delta area – co-operative improvement of the environment- has been a central approach throughout many centuries of Christian tradition, and not just a modern development.

But despite some inherent problems associated with the extreme Christian emphasis of anthropocentrism, we cannot overlook the fact that there are also within it some flashes of pro-environmental thoughts. Without being apologetic, one can also affirm that Christianity at its inception rarely confronted huge environmental conflicts as we have them today. So it will be absurd for neither Christianity nor its book of the bible to respond adequately or finding answers to the modern environmental problems just as we have it in the Niger Delta. But what can be adduced from its teaching is that every created being has the value of goodness inherent in it. It was created by a caring and loving God, who challenges man to be a responsible steward of his creation. The teaching of Christ is the sign of God's presence in nature and human environment and also signifies his joy of seeing it flourishing and reaching its proper fulfilment.

¹⁹ Attfield, R. *The Ethics of Global Environment*, Edinburgh, 1999, p.52.

2.4.2. Encyclicals

The Church, has for many years saddled itself with addressing different issues and problems that can be said to be 'issues of the moments' within every age ranging from human work, human rights, the family, race and gender, the dignity of the human person, technology and development etc. The church in the act of addressing these issues, gave rise to what today is known as the social teaching of the church.²⁰ In countless encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, letters and speeches, the popes have sought to recognise the Church and bring it into vital contact with fields such as ethics, art, social relations, economics, politics etc. Safeguarding the autonomy of every human discipline, they call for a mutually fruitful dialogue between the gospel and these other areas of life.²¹

But as an area of thought and reflection, concern for the environment, both in secular arena and the Catholic Social Teaching, came to the fore front according to Bernard V. Brady in the middle to late 1960s with the growing awareness of the impact human choices have on the environment. Both Pope Paul VI, in *Octogesima adveniens*, and the Synod of Bishops, in ***Justice in the World***, recognised the unfolding environmental crisis as an ethical problem.... These are the first two official comments on the environment in official Catholic social thought.²²

Pope Paul VI in his letter (*Octogesima adveniens* no.21) noted that: "Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in its turn the victim of this degradation."²³ In his letter to the United Nations at the start of the International Conference on Environment in Stockholm (1972), also Pope Paul VI made a strong point that humanity should see itself as having a common destiny with nature and relate to it as such.

„Beide, Mensch und Natur, sind schicksalhaft an einander gekettet und einer gemeinsamen zeitlichen Zukunft unterworfen. So wird sich die Menschheit der Notwendigkeit bewusst, an die Stelle des oft blinden, brutalen und seiner eigenen Dynamik überlassen Dranges nach materiellen Fortschritt die Achtung vor der

²⁰ Cf: *Centesimus Annus*. Rome, 1991, no.3: The social teaching of the church is said to have developed in the 19th century when the gospel encountered modern industrial society with its new structures for the production of consumer goods, its new concept of society, the state and authority, and its new forms of labour and ownership.

²¹ Dulles, A. *Fides et Ratio and the New Evangelisation*, in: *Theologie und Glaube*, 90. Jahrgang, 3/2000, Paderborn, p.413.

²² Brady, B.V. *Essential Catholic Social Thought*, New York, 2008, p.198.

²³ Pope Paul VI. *Octogesima Adveniens*, in: *Catholic Social Thought- Documentary Heritage*, O'Brien, D.J., and Shannon T.A., (eds.) Mary knoll, 1997, p. 237.

Biosphäre zu setzen und dabei ihren Lebensbereich, der eine ‚einzigste Erde‘ darstellt, wie das schöne Leitwort der Konferenz lautet, als ein Ganzes zu betrachten.“²⁴

On the other hand, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelisation of the Church in the Modern World), dealt with issues concerning the family life, peace, justice inter-religious dialogue and also human development, but it never mentioned extensively the urgent problem of environmental conflict facing the human community.

Pope John Paul II in the encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (The Redeemer of Humanity), made some far reaching statements that are widely regarded as milestone to the environment and sustainable development. While noting the threat of uncontrolled industrialization, in no.8 of this document, he speaks of “certain phenomena, such as the threat of pollution of the natural environment in areas of rapid industrialization” and furthermore in no.15, the Pope tries to reiterate the importance of sustainable development thus: “we seem to be increasingly aware of the fact that the exploitation of the earth, the planet on which we are living, demands rational and honest planning. It was the creator’s will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble ‘master’ and ‘guardian’, and not as heedless ‘exploiter’ and ‘destroyer’” The Pontiff in no.16 continues: “The essential meaning of the ‘kingship’ and ‘dominion’ of man over the visible world, which the Creator himself gave man for his task, consists in the priority of ethics over technology, in the primacy of the person over things, and in the superiority of spirit over matter.”²⁵

But the most extensive encyclical on the environment perhaps up till today came with the publication of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* in 1988. This document can be said to have been published at the heat of environmental debates in many circles of knowledge and politics. The salient points among others this document highlighted as strong foundation for environmental ethics and sustainable development are in no. 34 where it stated:

“Nor can the moral character of development exclude respect for the beings which constitute the natural world, which the ancient Greeks - alluding precisely to the order which distinguishes it - called the "cosmos." Such realities also demand respect, by virtue of a threefold consideration which it is useful to reflect upon carefully.

²⁴ Paul VI. Eine gastfreundliche Erde für zukünftige Generationen, Von der Stockholmer Konferenz über die menschliche Umwelt, Stockholm, 1 Juni, 1972.

²⁵ Paul, John II. *Redemptor Hominis*, Rome, 1979, no. 16.

The first consideration is the appropriateness of acquiring a growing awareness of the fact that one cannot use with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate - animals, plants, the natural elements - simply as one wishes, according to one's own economic needs. On the contrary, one must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the "cosmos."

The second consideration is based on the realization - which is perhaps more urgent - that natural resources are limited; some are not, as it is said, renewable. Using them as if they were inexhaustible, with absolute dominion, seriously endangers their availability not only for the present generation but above all for generations to come.

The third consideration refers directly to the consequences of a certain type of development on the quality of life in the industrialized zones. We all know that the direct or indirect result of industrialization is, ever more frequently, the pollution of the environment, with serious consequences for the health of the population.

Once again it is evident that development, the planning which governs it, and the way in which resources are used must include respect for moral demands. One of the latter undoubtedly imposes limits on the use of the natural world. The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to "use and misuse," or to dispose of things as one pleases. The limitation imposed from the beginning by the Creator himself and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to "eat of the fruit of the tree" (cf. Gen 2:16-17) shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity. A true concept of development cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renew ability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization - three considerations which alert our consciences to the moral dimension of development."²⁶

From the above long citation from this encyclical, one can adduce the social concern of the church directed towards an authentic development of man and society, (and perhaps with more emphasis to those living in developing countries), which would respect and promote all the dimension of the human person. This encyclical was out to challenge various developmental theories and strategies that exclude sustainability, and so aggravate the plight of most people living in developing countries.

The document *Sollicitudo rei socialis* is also widely acknowledged by many today as a key to the approach of environmental issues from the point of view of social ethics. Not only does the pope for the first time discuss urgent ecological issues in a major encyclical (i.e. nos.29 & 34), he also talked of the concept of economic, social and

²⁶ Paul, John, II. *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, (on Social Concern), Rome, 1988, nr.34.

cultural problems, (no.30), and also proposes the issue of solidarity as a new Christian virtue for our day (nos. 38-40). The Pontiff in this document, offers rich reflection of the connections between environmental degradation, misuse of technology, poverty and exploitation in international trade policies, and underdevelopment in the southern hemisphere and a harmful super-development fed by consumerism and materialism in the north.

Another urgent call from the Papal Magisterium relating to the environment is the document: Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation issued by Pope John Paul II for the World Day of Peace on January 1, 1990. This document was entirely devoted to environmental issues. Its main significance is the emphasis on the moral and religious aspects of the environmental crisis (nos. 2, 7 and 15). In no.7 Para 2, the Pontiff insists that "...delicate ecological balances are upset by uncontrolled destruction of animal and plants life or by reckless exploitation of natural resources. It should be pointed out that all of these, even if carried out in the name of progress and well-being, are ultimately to mankind's disadvantage." Further in a statement that will probably come as a surprise to many, the pontiff in no. 15 Para. 2 insist that "Christians, in particular are to realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the creator are an essential part of their faith." This excellent and unambiguous document from the pope is very different from many other church documents and worthy to note also is that it is heavily grounded on the ethical concepts of justice, peace and integrity which form the foundation of any further discourse on the environment by social ethicists and governments in policy formulations. So the Pontiff passed a note of warning by stating that:

"Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its life style. In many parts of the world society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage that these cause. As I have already stated, the seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of the human moral crisis. If an appreciation of the value of the human

person and of human life is lacking, we will also lose interest on others and in the earth itself.”²⁷

As a solution John Paul II argued that: “Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few.”²⁸

And to mark the 100th anniversary of the first major encyclical on social teaching, - Rerum Novarum, John Paul II issued another encyclical Centesimus Annus and he devoted some lines to the issues on the environment, notably in no.37, where he underscores the relationship between consumerism and human destruction of the environment.

Worthy to note, is that the environmental disasters of modern times and the public outcry of the persistent threats to the environment posed by human action (for example, the extinction and endangerment of plant and animal species; the depletion of natural resources, fisheries, and the ozone layer, water, air, and soil pollution; deforestation; and waste disposal) have made the urgent concern for the environment a priority in the field of academic as well as Catholic social thought.

The Catholic social thought also agrees that there are four different schools of thought about human relationship to the environment: The first and perhaps most popular position holds that the fundamental purpose of nature is to fulfil human needs. This view which is classically called Anthropocentrism can be summarized thus:

„Die Anthropozentrik geht von dem grundlegenden Unterschied des Menschen zu allen anderen Geschöpfen aus: Allein der Mensch ist fähig, aus sittlicher Freiheit die Welt zu gestalten. Zwar ist er auch eingebunden in naturale Abläufe, bleibt aber der einzige Verantwortliche für die Schöpfung. Diese hat ihren Wert allein in Bezug auf den Menschen, sei es ästhetisch oder funktional (als Nutzwert). Wo der Mensch Verantwortung für die Natur übernimmt, bleibt das daher immer eine Verantwortung vor den anderen Menschen. Natur ist nur insoweit schützenswert, als sie gegenwärtig oder künftig lebenden Menschen nützt.“²⁹

²⁷ Paul, John, II. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation, in: Brady, B.V. Essential Catholic Social Thought, New York, 2008, p.205.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Drewermann, E. Der tödliche Fortschritt. Von der Zerstörung der Erde und des Menschen im Erbe des Christentums, in: Rosenberger, M., Was dem Leben dient; Schöpfungsethische Weichenstellungen im Konziliaren Prozeß der Jahre 1987-89, Stuttgart, 2001, p.9.

If this view is to be held right, then it logically follows that man is allowed and indeed expected to use the environment as he sees fit. The religious justification for this position is that nature has been given to use by God to fulfil our basic needs and desires. But another side of this argument can be expressed thus:

„Kritisch wird diesem Ansatz von der Gegenseite oft unterstellt, auf diese Weise werde weiterhin die Natur ausgebeutet, alles werde nur auf den Menschen hin perspektiviert und damit nicht in seinem Eigenwert ernst genommen. Im Extremfall wird unterstellt, der Mensch sei in der Anthropozentrik der ‚unumschränkte Herr der Natur‘.“³⁰

But the clear argument for any social ethicist is that nature is good and useful to man; and its usefulness and goodness lies in the fact that man will continue to safeguard it and never misuse or pollute it for his selfish purposes.

The second typical position is that human beings are stewards of the earth. This view classically known as Biocentrism in environmental ethics seeks to extend the direct responsibility of man to cover all living things. In effect, man is not only responsible for himself but also for all non-human beings in the environment.

„Die Biozentrik setzt bei der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben an. Zunächst hat alles Lebende einen Eigenwert, der vom Menschen unabhängig ist. Damit ist dem Menschen die nichtmenschliche Natur vorab unverfügbar.“³¹

Here, one can only confirm that there are appropriate and inappropriate uses of the environment. Human beings should not exhaust it or despoil it. The Catholic social thought, in line with environmental ethics for instance, rightly conveys value to the environment for which reason the stability, integrity and beauty of biotic communities are to be conserved. Ethics consists in respecting life in the measure that one respects his own. This ethic of reverence to life does not recognise any relative ethics.

The third position, unlike the first and the second views, do reject the idea that humans are superior to or better than the rest of beings in the environment. It holds that there is a fundamental equality or parity within nature. This view otherwise known in the environmental ethical parlance as holism or physiocentrism summarises its position by stating that nature has rights just as humans have rights.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ ibid.

This view emphasises that while environmental problems can be traced back to the anthropocentric world-view of the industrial society the only way out of it is to see nature as the real and only subject (*natura naturans*) which encompasses man and his co-world (*natura naturata*).

„Dier Menschen sind nicht das Maß aller Dinge. Die Menschheit ist mit den Tieren und Pflanzen, mit Erde, Wasser und Feuer aus der Naturgeschichte hervorgegangen als eine unter Millionen Gattungen am Baum des Lebens insgesamt. Sie alle und die Elemente der Natur gehören zu der Welt um uns und so auch zu unserer Umwelt, aber eigentlich sind sie nicht nur um uns, sondern mit uns. Unsere natürliche Mitwelt ist alles, was von Natur aus mit uns Menschen in der Welt ist. Um dies zu betonen, spreche ich von unserer Mitwelt statt von unserer Umwelt. „wenn wir die Welt durchlaufen, läuft sie auch durch uns hindurch. Dies ist weder nur vom Ganzen noch vom Teil her gedacht, sondern es geht um beides. Wir nehmen das durch am Leben teil, dass die Natur in uns zur Sprache und so zu sich kommt.“³²

Since man is only a part of the whole and since nature is intelligible through him, he has the duty to regard and care for nature for its own sake in an ethical, normative and political manner and in the context of a community of rights.

The fourth position holds that humans have a unique position of power within nature and must use it responsibly. This view is known as pathocentrism. At the same time, influenced by holism or physiocentrism, it notes that humans are part of the interdependent web of creation. Humans are participants in nature with all creation. Humans are connected to the patterns and processes of nature.

2.5. The Term Sustainable Development and the Niger Delta

The term sustainable development derives its relevance in this work as a practical application of ethical principles that will check the environmental concerns and the negative impact of unethical activity by the government and oil companies on the Niger Delta region; and also the increasing social and ethical responsibility and role expected of them. And as a follow up it is also relates with the concepts of corporate and individual responsibilities which have evolved out of these concerns.

³² Meyer-Abich, K.M. Wege zum Frieden mit der Natur. Praktische Naturphilosophie für die Umweltpolitik, in: Halter, H., & Lochbühler W., eds., Ökologische Theologie und Ethik II, Köln, 1999, pp.78-80. Cf. Meyer, K.M., Zum Begriff einer Praktischen Philosophie der Natur, in: Meyer, K.M., (Hrg.), Frieden mit der Natur, Freiburg, 1979, pp. 27, 253, &257ff.

The term sustainability is variously understood and is applied in a variety of ways, thus, the connotations: environment and sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability, political sustainability, and sustainable development which are most often used among the key concepts. Johannes Hoffmann for instance, has analyzed this concept, showing its seemingly general use by various disciplines and groups, calling for a sustainability that is understood as a call to responsibility.³³

The term expresses a lesson that a visionary environmental enterprise in the Niger Delta depends on a timeless set of core ethical values and an enduring purpose beyond just making money. The goal according to this principle is typically towards preserving quality interactions with the local environment, the social system and also the economy.

But the topic of sustainability is one that is broad, sometimes vague and randomly applied and there is yet no universally acceptable general definition for this concept.³⁴ Nonetheless, sustainability has been essentially directed to consider “about living, working and ordering society in ways which are environmentally sustainable, encouraging reduction of pollution, reuse of resources, encouraging biodiversity, promoting social justice and fair society.”³⁵ So a sustainable society is one that can be said to be healthy, vital, resilient and able to creatively adapt to changing conditions over time. It is the long term health and vitality of cultural, economic, environmental and social systems.

The Brundtland Commission’s report - Our Common Future,³⁶ of 1987 was well received by environmentalists and ethicists among others, promoting as it were the concept that economic growth could be pursued ‘sustainably’ so long as natural resources were utilized and the environment managed with adequate regard for the future generations. The Commission advocated for a better balance between the public interests, particularly the environment, and the private interests pursued by- as in the Niger Delta- the oil companies. The subject of sustainable development has since become a ‘sine qua non’ of environmental ethics and discussions; and I

³³ Hoffmann, J. Nachhaltigkeit – Anspruch und Wirklichkeit, in: Jans, J., (Hrsg.) Für die Freiheit verantwortlich: Festschrift für Karl-Wilhelm Merks zum 65 Geburtstag, Freiburg, 2004, pp.209-220.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ United Nations (UNEP) Rio Earth Summit, 1992.

³⁶ World Commission on Environment & Development ‘Our Common Future’, Oxford, 1987.

wish to apply it in my research here as a required corporate responsibility for all the citizens and stakeholders alike in the Niger Delta.

So every activity in this region must be guided by the principle of “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generations.”³⁷ As such, the implication point to the idea that the present Nigerian generation has not the right, at the cost of the children and children’s children, to use nature’s resources at will and damage the environment. Future generations have also the right to live in an environment that is healthy and sustainable and take good advantage of its resources.

„Die gegenwärtige Generation darf nicht auf Kosten der Kinder und Kindeskinde wirtschaften, die Ressourcen verbrauchen, die Funktions- und Leistungsfähigkeit der Volkswirtschaft aushöhlen, Schulden machen und die Umwelt belasten. Auch die künftigen Generationen haben das Recht, in einer intakten Umwelt zu leben und deren Ressourcen in Anspruch zu nehmen. Diese Maxime versucht man neuerdings mit dem Prinzip der Nachhaltigkeit und der Forderung nach einer nachhaltigen, d.h. einer dauerhaften und zukunftsfähigen Entwicklung auszudrücken.“³⁸

Implicitly, the future growth and the overall quality of life of people in the oil producing communities of Nigeria are critically dependent on the quality of their environment. This work argues that a sustainable society will be achieved by a long term and integrated approach to developing and achieving a healthy community, by addressing economic, political, environmental and social issues. Fostering a strong sense of community and building partnerships and consensus among key stakeholders in the oil companies and within Nigerian political players are also important elements. An argument can also be sustained here that sustainability can be achieved when there is a proper political, economic and social system that will provide the conditions for the long-term carrying capacity of the region.

³⁷ Todaro, M.P. Economic Development, New York, 199, p.327.

³⁸ Hoffman, J. Nachhaltigkeit- Anspruch und Wirklichkeit, 2004, p.220.

Chapter III: The Politics of Oil and the Nigerian State

3.1. Oil Discovery and Exploration in Nigeria

The strategic location of oil in the world market is a key point, particularly the social relations of power that are spawned around oil extraction and commoditization in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. In this region, oil based extraction and accumulation involves not only the 'buying and selling' of petroleum products, but the socio-ethical problems of exploitation, violence, and the large-scale removal and transfer of energy resources and wealth from the sites of production in the rural communities to those of consumption, accumulation and distribution. Violent conflicts and environmental degradation are often the outcome of these problems and struggles over oil. Of note in this context is the quest to redress perceived injustices and unethical activities, the local communities in the Delta claim, embedded in the separation of those that profit from, and enjoy the benefit of oil production and commoditization (here I mean the trans-national alliance of oil multinationals and the ruling Nigerian elites), and from the others- the dispossessed in local oil producing communities from under their lands and waters the oil is extracted.

Shell discovered the first crude oil well at Oloibiri in January 1956 and that discovery began the history of petroleum exploration in Nigeria. After the first discovery, abundant petroleum fields and wells emerged in other rural communities in the Niger Delta, as well as in the rivers and river estuaries, littorals, and the Delta fringes.³⁹ As such, the villages of the Delta, onshore and offshore wells became imbued with crude oil and gas.

At the early stage of the exploration in Nigeria, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) was the sole explorer of the Niger Delta crude oil. In agreement with this fact Heinrich Bergstresser wrote:

„1956 fand das Konsortium Shell/BP das erste Öl in Olobiri, im heutigen Bundesstaat Bayelsa. Zwei Jahre später konnten schon 5,100 Fass am Tag exportiert werden. Damit begann innerhalb weniger Jahre ein sozialer und politischer Destruktions- Zersetzungsprozess, der nicht nur das Niger-Delta dauerhaft verändern sollte, sondern die Grundfesten des jungen, labilen

³⁹ Cf. Niger Delta Regional Development Master plan NDDC, Port Harcourt, 2006, p.75.

Vielvölkerstaates erschütterte. Im Delta und in seinen Küstengewässern wird 75 Prozent des Erdöls und gesamte Erdgas produziert. Heute sind neben dem nigerianischen Staatsunternehmen NNPC fast alle bekannten westlichen Energiegiganten im Niger-Delta vertreten , darunter Shell, Chevron/Texaco, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, British Gas, BP, Eni/Agip, Elf, Total, Statoil, Nexen, Tenneco, Sun Oil, Maurel & Prom, die brasilianische Petrobras, die chinesische Sinopec, die indische ONGC, die südafrikanische Sasol, sowie kleine nationale Unternehmen wie die Pan-Ocean, Sahara Group und Conoil. Sie alle, allen voran die internationalen Großkonzerne, machen seit jeher glänzende Geschäfte in Nigeria und haben alle Staats- und Wirtschaftskrisen, Militärputsche, Bürgerkrieg, Regierungs- und Politikwechsel und gewalttätige Unruhen weitgehend schadlos überstanden.“⁴⁰

Other petroleum businesses and companies came into being later and the region became known worldwide as petroleum producing area. Their effectiveness in the exploration of crude oil in the Niger Delta made the Nigerian Government to join the trend. It was through the government participation that Nigeria became a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

3.2. The Socio-Ethical Implications to the Region

The positive blessing of oil resource in the Niger Delta derives mainly from the huge financial resources it generates to the Nigerian nation's fiscal and economic programmes; since oil is an internationally-traded commodity that attracts foreign exchange. For a developing country like Nigeria, faced with capital constraint for developmental programmes, therefore, oil from the Niger Delta is a quick source of capital accumulation or foreign direct investment to meet her basic needs. A nation like Nigerian without oil from the Niger Delta may not be able to overcome capital shortage, which is a major sustainable development inhibition.

But despite its positive blessing, it has also left in the Niger Delta a complex of negative socio-ethical and environmental problems.⁴¹ The woes of the indigenous people and communities are well pronounced. These oil-related negative outcomes

⁴⁰ Bergstresser, H. Nigeria, Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea, Frankfurt am Main, 2010, p.19.

⁴¹ Fubara, D.M.J. Strategies for Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta, Port Harcourt, 2005, p.3.

have come to be known as 'the oil resource curse in the Niger Delta', and this operates through a number of channels.

Socio-ethical problems related to environmental degradation, pollution of land and rivers tend to increase with oil production leading to loss of income-earning opportunities for the oil producing communities. The loss of the farming and fishing economies of people around the Niger Delta was due to oil pollution of the sea, land, plants and air. The cassava and yam farmlands and the sea for village fishermen which are the central occupations of the rural communities in the central part of the Niger Delta are not safe from oil pollution.⁴²

Traditional and local craft-men who engage in hunting, canoe-carving, mat-making, palm oil processing and local gin distillation witnessed the negative effects of oil spillage on the sources of their traditional economies. "The Local economies of the oil bearing communities have collapsed. And they are not integrated into the oil economy of their communities...the success of the oil economy in their lands and rivers have not promoted their own capacities nor enhanced their lives. It has not promoted their self-reliance. It has not promoted the social engine of their society...the pace of development has left them behind."⁴³

Another socio-ethical dimension of this issue is that the oil exploration and exploitation has accounted for abject poverty among the indigenous population in the Niger Delta. Having been denied their means of livelihood- farming and fishing, many of them took to petty trading without adequate capital.⁴⁴ The people could not gain employment into the petroleum companies in their communities and villages because of their poor educational standards- the oil companies wanted only skilled and technical hands who can manage and work in the high- tech oil industries.⁴⁵

The prevalent conditions of unemployment and poverty in the region made majority of the people not to meet their basic daily human needs. The research findings of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) states that about eight persons occupy an apartment of two rooms in the booming populated villages and towns in the Delta, while an average of four persons live in one room.⁴⁶ Only few toilets of

⁴² Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, p.77.

⁴³ Enyia, N.T. Oil Exploration and Production in Rivers State: An Analysis of the Political and Socio-Economic Consequence for Six Communities 1950-1990, Port Harcourt, 1991, p.183.

⁴⁴ Wordu, S.A. The Petrol-State: Environmental and Socio-Economic Crisis, Port Harcourt, 2006, p.12.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Cf. Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, p.88.

these dwellings have septic tanks; the rest are latrines in the bush and at water fronts. No reliable access to electricity supply and pipe-borne water, respectively. Cooking fuel in all the communities and villages in the Niger Delta is more of firewood.⁴⁷

These social and economic inadequacies impacted deeply to the poor health conditions to Niger Delta inhabitants. Oil spills that contaminated springs and wells brought water-related diseases and associated illness. Since the population is rapidly increasing because of oil workers and contractors, the illness of HIV/AIDS became widespread all over the villages and communities in the area, thereby reducing the average life expectancy of this rural people.

The rural migrant from the Niger Delta, who is anxious to escape the socio-ethical consequences of environmental degradation in their villages and communities, is caught up in a bind in the urban area. As one moves in among his kinsmen at the first point of contact in the already over-populated slums in the cities, one finds out that several other migrants have also made the move to this urban destination to better their life chances. The little shack meant for two persons is made to accommodate seven with each of them breathing down the others back at night and transmitting, as it were, communicable diseases. "The environmental implication of the social, economic and political perspectives of slum area is the emergence of decayed physical environments. Overcrowding is generally regarded as a hazard to health. It encourages the spread of infectious diseases such as typhoid and tuberculosis. This position is congruent with the theory that a filthy and decaying environment is a health hazard for slum dwellers"⁴⁸ In Nigeria, population growth which is as a consequence of migration from the Niger Delta helps to increase the density of human settlements beyond the ability of the local ecosystem to renew itself or to absorb waste in both rural and urban areas. Thus, the migrants finds themselves in a vicious circle, unable to find a means of livelihood in the rural area, unable to realise their dreams and aspirations in their new urban abode, and crammed in a little room with many people in a similar plight; they begins to raise their level of awareness about their deprived social condition and share experiences

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Onokerhoraye, A.G. Case Studies of Urban Slums and Environmental Problems in Nigerian Cities, in: Sada, P.O., & Odemerho F.O., (eds.) Environmental Issues and Management in Nigerian Development, Ibadan, 1988, pp.118-131.

with the others. So part of the criminal activities and social decadence in the Niger Delta stems from the initial levels of shared experiences and aspirations by people who find themselves in a deprived environmental and social conditions.

Since in the region the traditional family system that represents the pre-eminent institution for socialization of the human person is severely affected, issues relating to child's upbringing and education have become quite evident; with parents wittingly or unwittingly abandoning their children to whims of social ills like child trafficking and prostitution. Evidence in my research shows that the spate of truancy, juvenile delinquency, kid robberies and other social problems in the region are glaring indications of the depravity of which the society has finally gone to.⁴⁹

Because of the violence in the region, the social ills of rape and child prostitution are common. There are some occasions when angry and hungry young Niger Delta militants vent their frustration on helpless women and girls of minor age in the rural communities and villages. Furthermore, soldiers and anti-riot policemen who sent by the government to calm the militant youths in the restive region, end up abusing women and young girls in the area. At night, they invade private homes, terrorizing residents with beatings and raping young and helpless women and girls. Another point is that, girls and young women who are looking for economic survival 'hang around' the oil companies workers in the Niger Delta and keep themselves at the service of both the Nigerians and foreign oil workers who are believed to have been enriched with the 'oil money' -these women are given a pittance at the end of every sexual meeting with these men. Worse still, too many of these relationships end up with children and the women are left alone to carry the burden of bring up these 'fatherless babies'. To check this problem, the association of Niger Delta Women for Justice (NDWJ) has been fighting for a law in the Nigerian parliament, that will make it mandatory for the oil workers to claim their offspring and if possible the mothers of such children born out of any of their promiscuous activities.⁵⁰

The Niger Delta Women for Justice started in 1999 when women from the region and their allies staged simultaneously protests in Nigeria and London against dangerous burning of natural gas by the oil companies. In Nigeria, the women and

⁴⁹ Amaekwe, E. The Niger Delta Oil Crisis and the Victimization of Women, in: Okere, T.I., and Njoku, K.C., (eds.) The Niger Delta: From the slave trade to Oil Rivers to Crude Oil, Owerri, 2007, p.93.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

allied men blocked the Shell oil stations, while in London thirteen activists occupied the Shell headquarters. They barricaded themselves in the Managing Director's offices and broadcast to the outside via digital cameras.⁵¹

But more importantly, the concept of this association according to Amakwe Mary Ebere, one of the earliest members, is that solidarity and team work can only help them to grow and also be selfless. But before this will happen, they also share the view that there should be a mass consciousness, mass mobilization and mass participation. For them, this is the only way to create awareness at the grassroots about their rights. For them also, without a radical rethinking, anger and violence will continue to be worse in the region. Therefore, getting women into the mainstream decision making process becomes urgent for development.⁵²

3.3. The Environmental Implications

Without denying the enormous role the oil industry has to the economy of Nigeria, the environmental impacts of the same industry in particular, cannot be underestimated.

“In der Kategorie der weltweiten Verbrennung ungenutzter oder minderwertiger Gasvorkommen belegt Nigeria den zweiten Platz hinter Russland, das noch drei Mal mehr ölgebundenes Gas verbrennt. Zusammen mit Iran und Irak jagen diese vier Staaten allein die Hälfte des weltweit abgefackelten Gases von 140 Milliarden Kubikmeter in die Luft und vergiften die Atmosphäre. In Nigeria hat bislang niemand ernsthaft Korrekturen angemahnt, obwohl seit Anfang der achtziger Jahre entsprechende gesetzliche Regelungen bestehen und mehrmals eines novelliert wurden. Denn es ist immer noch wesentlich einfacher und mangels eines lokalen Marktes preiswerter, die festgelegten Konventionalstrafen zu begleichen, als sich der aufwändigen Aufbereitung des stark verunreinigten Gases zu widmen.“⁵³

It is in Nigeria estimated that a great percentage of natural gas from petroleum production in the Niger Delta is flared into the atmosphere. This flaring is a serious hazard. It destroys a sustainable means of livelihood of the citizens of the region and encourages forest encroachment. It involves the process of burning natural gas that is associated with crude oil when it is pumped up from the ground as a result of

⁵¹ Ibid. P.96.

⁵² Ibid.P.100.

⁵³ Bergstresser, H. Nigeria: Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea, Frankfurt am Main, 2010, p.23.

insufficient infrastructures to make use of the natural gas; hence flaring is employed to dispose of this associated gas. At a very high temperature the multitude of flared oil in the air causes noise pollution and produces hazardous gas that affects the rural dwellers. The oil companies in the Niger Delta are said to be one of the highest contributors to global warming in the world.⁵⁴

Another point of ethical concern is that residential areas are at times near the flaring sites. The roaring of the flares and belching of the dark clouds full of very dangerous toxins from the flaring pollutes the environment of the villagers. And due to the radioactive elements of the gas flared, people of the region mainly women and children suffer asthma, chronic bronchitis, blood disorder and other diseases.⁵⁵

So in the Niger Delta communities and villages, apart from the air pollution from the oil industry's emissions and flares day and night, producing poisonous gases that are silently and systematically wiping out vulnerable airborne biota and so endangering the life of plants, game, and rural dwellers, there is also widespread water pollution and soil and land pollution that respectively result in the death of most aquatic lives, while as earlier noted, their agricultural lands are contaminated with oil spills, which are dangerous for farming, and thereby producing insignificant yields for the people.⁵⁶

The heap of drill cutting and sludge during this processes prevent vegetation growth around the dump sites as they affect the quality of the topsoil. In aquatic areas of the Delta, they sink faster into the bottom water table and pollute them. As a result, the agricultural practices of the people in the neighbourhood are being hampered. Worthy to note is that oil destroys the leaves of plants while it affects its process of transpiration, and photosynthesis are being disturbed by oil which is present on the plants, and to a large extent, affecting the vegetation of oil producing communities

⁵⁴ O'Hara, K. Environmental Human Rights and Development in the Niger Delta, in: Asogwa, C.O., Human Rights in Nigeria, The Way Forward, Enugu, 2004, p.265. (Kevin O'Hara is the Director, Human Rights Commission Ebonyi State, in the South-Eastern Nigeria).

⁵⁵ Jike, T.V. Environmental Degradation, Social Disequilibrium, and the Dilemma of Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, in: Journal of Black Studies, 2004, vol. 34, no.5, p.692.

⁵⁶ Idoniboye-Obu, B. Resource Exploitation and Impact of Industrial Activities, in: Okonta, I., and Douglas, O. Where the Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil, London, 2003, p.64.

and villages. During the process of oil drilling, carbon monoxide present in stack gas from catalytic cracking of the wells are poisonous to plants and animals.⁵⁷

Further, the effects of oil exploration and drilling process in the region also poses great danger to human live. Leakage of petroleum sinks into bottom water table of the communities and this causes great damage to the health of the rural people; since they depend heavily on such waters due to the lack of pipe borne water or fresh waters.⁵⁸

It is worrisome to note is that the Nigerian Government has projected since 1969 different deadlines to put an end to these unethical practices, unfortunately none has come to be optimally achieved. The Nigerian Judiciary also on its part has at different times ordered different oil companies operating in the Niger Delta to put an end to gas flaring because as the observed, "it is a gross violation of the constitutionally and guaranteed right to life and dignity, which include right to clean environment, poison free healthy environment."⁵⁹ But the oil companies in the area hardly adhere to this ethical principle, rather gas flaring goes on unabated at a very scorching temperature.

3.4. Oil Spill in the Region

Oil spill simply is the pollution of the environment by oil. But concerns here are with the sources and problems of oil spill into the Niger Delta environment. Virtually, all oil and gas exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta takes place in villages and communities where people live.

Oil spillage during drilling by the oil companies in the Niger Delta pollutes their environment, contaminates their land, sea and drinking water of the communities. Several minor and several major oil spills, related to well discharges and tanker operations, are reported each year on rivers, on the sea and on land of the region. The costs of such accidental spills are so enormous to the environment. There are also other specific impacts of oil spills relating to wetlands, loss of fish, crustaceans

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Jike, T.V. 2004, p.692.

and other aquatic resources, loss of livelihood through the loss of fishing grounds and gears, wildlife migration and decline in hunting, destruction of farmlands, reduced agricultural productivity and yield, displacement of inhabitants of the rural communities, the spread of water borne epidemics and diseases, etc. These spills are incessantly caused by blowouts, corrosion, equipment failure, negligence, old age equipment, and production/maintenance operational error arising from the drilling sites in the Niger Delta. Other remote causes include low technological capacity and expertise by unskilled oil workers, weakness of legislative control and enforcement of regulations of the Nigerian environmental laws, callous and secretly shrouded nature of the operations of the multinational oil companies in the Delta. It may not be over-exaggerative to indicate that the greatest single environmental problem associated with the petroleum industry in the Niger Delta results from offshore and onshore oil spillages. "Among the oil producing communities of the Delta region, oil spills are known to have rendered large areas of once agricultural productive land useless and destroyed aquatic life. These dangers have from time to time attained international dimensions through oil tanker accidents whose impact on aquatic and coastal ecology may sweep over wide areas."⁶⁰

There are also evidences of corroded, rusty and visibly leaking pipelines in most parts of region; not counting out the persisting sabotage of oil pipelines and installations by restive youths and criminals since these high pressure pipeline crisscross through people's villages and farms. Even natives and community member of the Niger Delta, sometimes intentionally damage pipelines to express their dissatisfaction with the perceived corporate misdemeanours and malpractices of multinational oil companies, and demand restitution. There are several incidences of tapping and breaking the oil pipelines to siphon crude and sell it on the black-market.⁶¹ Loss of lives and property has also been tragic consequences of pipelines vandalization among the rural oil-producing communities and villages.

Unfortunately spills and pipeline leaks and vandalization are poorly monitored and repairs are sometimes not carried out because of the corrupt system under which the oil explorations are sometimes being carried out. In many cases, leaks and spills

⁶⁰ Ndagi, I.O. Industry, Development and the Nigeria Environment, in: Adegoke, S.O., Waste Management within the context of Sustainable Development", Lagos, 1990, p.97.

⁶¹ Duruigbo, E. Oil Development in Nigeria: A Critical investigation of Chevron Corporation's performance in the Niger River Delta, Port Harcourt, 2001, p.15. (Emeka Durigbo- A Nigerian Professor of social ethics and environmental law at Texan Southern University. He is a specialist on environmental law).

routinely persist for long before they are stopped or cleaned up. A single leak for instance in the Otuegwu village of the Delta reportedly spilled for several months before repair operations commenced. According to the villagers, oil workers do often inspect the pipelines but do not repair leaks, claiming sabotage.⁶²

Ken Saro-Wiwa, the late renowned Niger-Delta human right activist and environmentalist, while commenting on the first oil spill in the Shell Bori Field said that he was a “witness to a great damage which the spill occasioned to the town of Kegbara Dere. Water sources were poisoned, the air was polluted, farmland devastated. I watched with absolute dismay as indigent citizens found no help from Shell”.⁶³

Lastly, forest encroachment also destroys the means of livelihood of the people of this region and so affects in a great measure a development that is sustainable. Since oil and gas are naturally under the earth, oil companies then have to search extensively and perhaps comprehensively in different locations before oil is finally discovered and this search involves cadastral and seismic survey. During this process, bush roads are constructed through which workers and heavy equipments are transported to sites. As the case maybe, people’s homes, sacred forests and shrines are destroyed. Though most of the oil companies sometimes promise compensation, but things like ancestral homes of families and the destroyed abode of spirits and gods guiding the communities cannot be adequately compensated.

3.4.1. Claims by the Oil Companies

Business Principles and Policy Guidelines:

As earlier observed, there are a number of the world’s leading oil companies operating in the Niger Delta, and these companies never fail to tell their own stories and give explanations to the world on socio-ethical issues affecting oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta. The Shell oil company for instance, claims that it has a detailed environmental programme designed to bring all operation up to internationally accepted levels of performance in the area. It further claims that its

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Okonta and Douglas, 2003, p.77

policy is that all explorations and exploitation activities in the region are planned and executed so as to minimize environmental impact on the region. It claims that it strives for continuous environmental improvement and like Shell worldwide, operates with the Royal Dutch/Shell Group Statement of General Business Principles and the Policy Guidelines on Health, Safety and the Environment. The company claims it recognizes the gap between its intentions and its current performance. They claim to be working hard to renew ageing facilities, reduce the number of oil spills in the course of operations, the amount of gas that is flared and to reduce waste products. Oil companies, (especially Shell) although, never denied that hazardous gases are emitted when fuel is burnt in their operations and that do contribute immensely to local air pollution. They pointed to the unique challenges of operating in the large expand of area of the Niger Delta which are sometimes very difficult to navigate. According to them, the environmental performance in the Niger Delta should be seen in the context of Nigeria and its major social, ethical and economic problems and priorities. Though they claim that different people in different areas might aim for the same environmental standards at any one time, but they will be at different stages of development. Nigeria's environmental priorities are influenced by the social and economic circumstances, which drive its development programme and oil companies operating in this setting are similarly affected.

Oil companies in the Niger Delta also claim that their practices today are different from those applied when most of their facilities and pipelines constructed in the 60's, 70's and 80's. They were acceptable then and in line with standards of technology then prevalent. But in the modern times, Shell claims that it replaced many of their pipes and flow lines; different flow stations and gas plants were upgraded, bund walls and stacks were repaired or replaced to improve flaring efficiency, many pipelines and manifolds were upgraded. In 2008 also, Shell claims to have provided many of their flow stations and processing facilities with equipment to gather and harness their associated gas, and that their firm, local communities and its customers are somewhat able to utilize this gas under normal operation conditions. Continuous venting of gas the oil firms also do claim will be eliminated in due course.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Cf. Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, Field Names-Codes and IML Numbers, Port Harcourt: 2008, p.2-16.

3.5. Shell-BP in Nigerian Oil Politics

Before Nigerian independence in October 1960, the British colonial administration entrusted the vast petroleum reserves in the Niger Delta area to the hands of two foreign oil giants, namely the British Petroleum and the Royal Dutch Shell Company. The agreement under which the two giant oil concerns had a virtual monopoly of Nigerian Petroleum resources was based on the 'fifty-fifty' formula⁶⁵ for sharing petroleum proceeds between the prospecting company and the Nigerian nation. The 'fifty –fifty' agreement which is an imposed term by the British colonial masters on Nigeria provides that the Nigerian government was to receive 50% of the oil company's profit (the Nigerian government are to receive their quota as import duties in equipment brought into the country by the companies, the statutory mining royalties and income tax on overall profits), and this implies that the net operational profit of the oil companies would not be subject to tax in Nigeria if it did not exceed the total of import tax and royalties paid by the company to the government in any given year. The Nigeria government's share of the profits from the petroleum industry was further reduced by the companies' right to deduct from their taxable gross profit allowances on their capital outlay under the government programme of incentives to investors in industry.⁶⁶

Invariably, the success of Shell-BP encouraged other oil majors to explore for oil in Nigeria. Really some of these new oil concerns (for example AGIP- an Italian petroleum company and a subsidiary of the Nigerian owned ENI Group) were ready to make a fairer deal, but the Nigerian government of the day then, due to its pathetic dependence on the British economy and political control, felt unable to review the 'fifty-fifty' agreement which the colonial government (Britain) signed with Shell-BP. Even though the Nigerian government then has recognised that the deals with the new oil companies⁶⁷ were far more conducive to Nigeria's economic

⁶⁵ Enemugwem, J.H., *The Niger Delta and the Revolution of Nigeria, 1956-2006*, in: Falola, T., and Paddock, A. *Emergent Themes and Methods in African Studies*, Trenton, New Jersey, 2009, p.473. "Worthy to note here is that the Arab Oil producing countries had long rejected this so-called '50-50' formula, and so formed themselves into an Arab Organisation of Oil Exporting Countries (AOPEC), and this body subsequently enlarged into what we have today as the Organisation of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC), as a body for conducting collective bargaining with oil-consuming nations for better prices and conditions of operations."

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Cf. Ibid. P.228 "The offer from AGIP then stipulates first, that apart from the fifty-fifty formula by which profit was to be shared with British and American firms, Nigeria also had an option to buy 30% of the AGIP shares after oil had been struck in commercial quantities, which would yield for Nigeria another 15% of the profits, thus bringing her total share of profit to 65%. Second, taking into consideration of Nigeria's critical

interest, they were unable to use it in challenging Shell-BP's extortionate privileges. The government apparently legitimised the activities of Shell-BP and their allies by refusing to join the OPEC until 1970 and therefore, for ten years after independence allowing these international oil concerns to defraud the Nigerian nation of the difference between what the oil companies paid for OPEC petroleum and Nigerian petroleum from the oil Delta region.⁶⁸

Also, foreign partners were very reticent on the size of Nigeria's petroleum reserves that they had discovered. However, once they got this dishonest agreement tied up, the oil, which they denied that ever existed in commercial quantity, started in 1959 gushing out in flood. Nigeria's crude oil production then dramatically shot up from year to year until it occupied its place as one of the highest producers in the OPEC cartel.

Though Shell as the oldest and the most influential expatriate oil company in the Niger Delta, it is also involved in oil business in well over one hundred countries, but the Nigeria affiliate- Shell Petroleum Development Company, SPDC- remains the biggest corporate player, as it accounts for high percentage of Shell's entire global production, the largest outside of the US.⁶⁹

Suffice to say that the advantage and the success story of Shell over other oil companies in the Niger Delta are mainly attributed to its very intensive activities and pioneering position. As a pioneer company in the Nigeria oil industry it still retains its strong position in holding the best yielding territories in the Delta.

3.5.1. Shell-BP and the Environment

It may be arguable that the oil industry was really not primarily the only cause of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. But one cannot deny the fact that it dramatically hastened and elevated pollutions in the region. As some tend to believe, as far back as 1930, bad and unorthodox agricultural practices, coupled

shortage of capital at that time, AGIP agreed that 30% shareholding could be paid for in instalments over a reasonable period to be determined by the two contracting partners.”

⁶⁸ Cf. Schatzl, L.H. Petroleum in Nigeria, Ibadan, 1969, pp. 84-93.

⁶⁹ Kretzman, S. Nigeria's Drilling Fields, Multinational Monitor, in: Ukeje, C.U., Oil Capital, Ethnic Nationalism and Civic Conflicts in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, Port-Harcourt, 2004, p.185.

with dramatic explosion in population had led to the deforestation of the Ogoni-land in the Niger Delta.

„Der Aufstieg der Ölindustrie in Ogoni fällt genau in die Zeit dieser dramatischen Verschlechterung der Lebensumstände für die Bevölkerung, und sie verursachte zusätzliche, bisher ungekannte Probleme für Mensch und Umwelt.“⁷⁰

On the other hand, it is very pertinent to note that a more enduring aspect of Nigeria's oil history, which threatens the social, human and subsistence living in the oil producing regions occurs as a result of environmental degradation through the activities of Shell and perhaps some other oil companies in the region. Shell's oil exploration and production activities in the Niger Delta area are for a greater percentage based on land. This means that the company's operations take place in the environment inhabited by various communities of the area⁷¹, including the flora and fauna.⁷²

It is also worthwhile here to note the major phases of oil exploration and production activities in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria, which as the case may be, could have far-reaching environmental, social and health impacts on the host oil communities and villages in general:

Prospecting activities of Shell in the Niger Delta communities and villages involves the gathering of geophysical and geological data, including gravitational and magnetic programmes, seismic-line cuttings and seismographic blasting. It is an information gathering exercise with a view to establishing the exact formation, location and quantity of oil deposits. In the Niger Delta, prospecting and exploration activities are mainly associated with the destruction of vegetation, farmlands and human settlements to allow for seismic cutting lines. Serious environmental hazards associated with this activity include destruction of fish and other forms of aquatic life,

⁷⁰ Danler, D., & Brunner, M. Shell in Nigeria: Multinationale Konzerne in der Dritten Welt, in: Adeniyi, E.O., & Belle-Imam, I.B., (eds.) Development and the environment, Ibadan, 1986, p.13. (Adeniyi, E.O and Imam-Bello are both of Nigerian Institute of social and Economic Research in Ibadan South Western Nigeria.)

⁷¹ Cf. Bergstresser H. Nigeria: Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea, Frankfurt a. Main, 2010, p.26.

„Am Ressourcenreichtum des Niger-Deltas laben sich die Öl-Multis, während Steinzeit und Moderne hier ganz dicht beieinander der liegen: Hochkomplexe Petrochemie neben ärmlichen Lehmhütten, zumeist oberirdisch verlegte Pipelines durchqueren Weiler und Dörfer, verlaufen häufig direkt vor den Eingängen der strohbedeckten Behausungen.“

⁷² Cf. Okanta, I., & Douglas, O. Where the Vulture Feast: Shell, Human Right and Oil, London, 2003, p.63. (Ike Okonta is an environmental writer and journalist from the Niger Delta; while Oronto Douglas is Nigeria's leading human rights lawyer and was a member of the legal team that represented Ken Saro-Wiwa – a Niger Delta environmentalist and human rights activist who was hanged by a former Nigerian military junta- in 1995. Both are on the management committee of Environmental Rights Action, Nigeria).

both marine and freshwater around the prospecting sites in the rural villages. Noise pollution and vibration from seismographic blasting also affects buildings, fence walls, locally built bridges and access roads. When these impacts occurs as have become routine in the region, there are usually no attempts to salvage or rectify the damages done to the environmental, health and social well-being of the people and the ecosystem.

Drilling activities by Shell Company impact negatively on the fragile environment in the Niger Delta because this entails the drilling and of cutting mud and sludge; which are stockpiled around drilling sites in the villages. Expectedly, the impacts of these activities which take place within the areas inhabited by people have far more devastating effects on Niger Delta communities than offshore operations that affect more of the marine environment. Other sources of environmental pollution arising from drilling operations include the abandoned cuttings, dumpsites and waste pits containing chemical wastes capable of seeping into the groundwater around drilling sites. One prominent instance is in Otor-Udu- a small village community in the Western Delta, where Shell's oil well was drilled right into the heart of the village. Children, oblivious of the health hazards, later converted the drilling waste pits near the well into a swimming pool and playing ground.⁷³ Furthermore, the heap of drill cutting and sludge prevent vegetation growth around dump sites as they affect the quality of topsoil. In aquatic areas of the Niger Delta, they sink faster into the bottom water table and pollute them. The fact is that the menace of contaminated soil, dumpsites and burrow pits and drill sites due to expanding oil and gas activities has become a treacherous environmental problem among oil producing communities in Nigeria's delta region.

After drilling, Shell then starts the actual production of oil wells and then the active recovery of petroleum begins. Production and storm waters are the major wastes during this phase as hydrocarbon (petroleum) oil is usually accompanied by what is known as 'produce water' which represents the largest volume of polluted effluent. They are very toxic and known to contain high salinity, heavy metals and organic and inorganic contaminants. When discharged on land, produce water are known to have very devastating effects on flora and fauna species besides causing ground water pollution. When deposited in swamps, produce water leads to the depletion of aquatic resources. For instance, the River Nun in the eastern Delta, which was once

⁷³ Ibid. P.93.

famous for its serene beauty, and a tributary of the Niger, has been reduced to an ugly nature of its former self. Because of environmental pollution occasioned by the oil companies, the beautiful beaches and the somnolent waves at of the Niger Delta Sea are no more. The hydrocarbon character of the once beautiful River Nun, (River Nun is located around the Ogoni area of River State in the Niger Delta region) particularly the area around the company's oil field at Nun River flow station, has been radically altered for the worse, perhaps forever.⁷⁴

3.6. Oil Companies and Community Relation

By the Petroleum Act of 1969, and the Land Use Decree of 1978, all ownership of land and territorial waters and all their resources (e.g. oil and other natural minerals) were transferred to the government. Consequently, the individual ownership of land in Nigeria was restricted. These laws had implications both for the oil companies themselves (repeal of the 1914 Oil Mineral Act) and the ethnic minorities of the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta region (e.g. denial of any claims to the proceeds from the oil industry). Since crude oil exploration began to yield positive and seen results in the Niger Delta, the initial excitement by the people is that they would have some infrastructural development (like hospital, schools, drinking water etc) as „oil producing Community“-to cushion the effects of the pollution of their environment. The exploration of oil in the Niger Delta brought hope to the people that their old dilapidated infrastructure would be refurbished and that new ones would be put in place to improve both the welfare and standard of the villagers and dwellers. There was also an expectation that as oil companies begin to carry out their operations and implement community development programmes, more people from the host communities would have the opportunity of being gainfully employed in the oil companies. But in the context of prolonged denials and frustrations, multinational oil companies are seen more as quasi-governments due to the fact that the real government is too distant and perceived as having not shown sufficient interest. As earlier observed, most of the oil companies have neither come to terms with this pervasive public expectation nor delivered them well. These unmet or failed expectations, and the social frustrations they provoke on the rural communities, are

⁷⁴ Cited in: Ibid. P.71.

translating into a persisting co-habitation without affection dogging relationship with host communities in the last two decades, at least.

„Während ein Ölfund überall auf der Welt für denjenigen, dem das Land gehört, Reichtum bedeutet, heißt es für jene Gemeinschaften in Nigeria, die sich als Nutznießer und Eigentümer eines ölreichen Landstrichs sehen, nichts als Schwierigkeiten, Enteignung und Umweltverschmutzung“.⁷⁵

For the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta, the oil wealth in their land is synonymous with suffering, deprivation and environmental degradation.

It is pertinent to note that one of the greatest challenges facing the oil industry in Nigeria is how people especially their host communities perceive it. Some oil companies; in fact have departments overseeing issues that are traditionally the prerogative of government.⁷⁶ Some have annual budget for community development far greater than what the some state governments allocate for development, but that does not translate into much in terms of concrete commitments and interventions on behalf of communities. For this reason, many oil companies are finding themselves in great difficulties precipitated by growing anger among host communities. Although oil companies have become the only 'government' visible to the people of the Niger Delta, they publicly repudiate this notion by making the point about not wanting to usurp government's responsibility towards its people. This logic however ignores the peculiar social and developmental circumstances that obtain in the Niger Delta, and the oil communities are the least happy within that social equation. No doubt, oil companies are not oblivious of those critical developmental circumstances and problems confronting their host hosts and why social discontentment is upbeat. They are also quite aware that successive post-independence governments have not been keeping the agreement with oil-producing communities in terms of providing them with the most basic social amenities such as good roads, electricity, portable water, good drainage, schools and health care facilities, etc. Oil companies sometimes don't even show great interest nor concern on matters that have to do with the well-being of their host communities; carelessly allowing themselves to be seduced by the poor governance culture and lax environmental regimes and laws in Nigeria or indeed outright failure to implement and enforce such regimes.

⁷⁵ Danler, D., & Brunner, M. Shell in Nigeria: Multinationale Konzerne in der Dritten Welt, Op. Cit., p. 6f.

⁷⁶ Cf. Ukeje, C. Oil and Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta, in: Centre for Development and Conflict Management Studies, Ile-Ife, 2002.

The fact that some of the oil firms in the Niger Delta have relatively spent large amounts of money on projects in their host communities and these communities still feel dissatisfied continues to be a major sore point in the relationship between oil companies and communities. The reason for this stems from several factors; this development is influenced perhaps by sharp practices involving a network of relationship including staff of oil companies, contractors, opinion leaders/local Chiefs and claims agents. Observation shows that contracts are sometimes awarded to opinion leaders and Chiefs from these communities who only collect contract fees and abandoning the jobs they were paid for undone.⁷⁷

Some opinion leaders/local Chiefs sometimes colludes with contractors to certify jobs done while in reality that is not the case only to share a percentage of the contracts sum to the detriment of the benefiting communities and villages. Also some oil companies are sometimes made to initiate and execute ill defined projects which are quickly abandoned or vandalised by some people in the communities including influential village leaders; who turn around to blame the oil companies and to mobilise their communities against them in fresh demands for projects.⁷⁸

In some cases, basic developmental projects are overvalued by oil companies who benefit enormously from sharp practice including the duplication of projects.

Sometimes also, community dissatisfaction with certain Assistance projects stems in most cases from the fact that projects are initiated and executed without consultation with the benefiting communities. In this regard, projects that are not needed by communities are sometimes executed. A classic case in point is the uniform construction of six classroom blocks for host communities or the provision of classroom furniture for all the local communities in the Niger Delta; without first of all taking into consideration the peculiar need of these communities. It is instructive to note in this regard, the case of a particular community where hospital equipments were provided whereas the community has no health institution and the equipment were allowed to rot away. There is equally the case of another community where a six classroom block was constructed even though the community preferred the completion of its abandoned secondary school project which would have accommodated a greater need of the people than the classroom blocks provided by

⁷⁷ United Nations Development Programme: Niger Delta Human Development Report, 2006, Abuja, 2006, p.140.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

an oil company. There is in addition the case of an oil producing community in which a local market provided for the community was not put to use because the community was not consulted in the initiation and execution of the project.⁷⁹

3.7. Government and Oil Communities

Lack of Trust: A great source of concern and friction in Nigeria is that the relationship between the government and the oil producing communities has always been very hostile, mostly by a cycle of official impunity and grassroots anomie and vice-versa. The denial of elements required in human development is inherent in the Nigerian political system, and conflict often derives from malfunctioning system. Some sources of violence in the region can attributed to the suppression of autonomy and identity and an unequal distribution of life chances.⁸⁰

The 'love-hate' relationship between government and oil communities is mostly over substantive allegations of neglect and marginalisation by government in terms of improving the general welfare of citizens, providing them with basic amenities, creating opportunities for good governance, gainful employment and other socio-economic opportunities, and putting effective mechanisms in place to improve the effects of reckless oil field practices by the multinational oil companies on the Niger Delta environment. The citizens on their own part complain about government attitude of treating them like second class citizens (or as colonial enclaves) whose resources should be plundered with impunity. They berate the political elites who control the apparatus of power for using oil resources to develop other regions of the country to the exclusion of oil producing minority groups. Most of the inhabitants of the oil communities find it rather disconcerting that government- whose claim to authority and legitimacy derive from its standing in the eyes of the public is not pressing the multinational oil companies whose interest is making profit to be alive to their responsibilities.

As the experiences of the people in the Niger Delta communities show, this form of 'internal colonialism' is unacceptable since it distances the government from the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Njoku, F. Development, <conflict and Peace in Nigeria, in: Ikejiani-Clark, M., (ed.) Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria, Ibadan, 2009, p.228.

people and punctures their yearnings and aspirations to a sustainable development.⁸¹

The basic fact is that all these complain by the people have some inherent truth; but they should also not preclude oil communities from engaging with government through dialogue and mutual understanding. There are fewer numbers of oil communities in the Niger Delta without a long list of grievances against the government, mostly for not carrying out developmental projects. It is unfortunate to note that many of these communities have come to the realisation that peaceful options are no longer helpful in drawing government's attention to the routine tragedies facing them and their environment on a daily basis. Some citizens of the region have resorted to social disturbances, civil uprising and in some cases, arms running has become a better option and even keeps getting worse.

The Rise to Consciousness in the Niger Delta: Lemmy Owugah identified three distinct but overlapping phases could be discerned in government-oil communities' relation. During the 1980s for instance, the oil communities aired their grievances through peaceful means by sending high-powered delegations to government and the multinational oil companies; writing petitions; writing of articles (to sensitise the international community of their plight); pursuing expensive, laborious and endless litigations and staging peaceful demonstrations. But these methods failed woefully to yield the expected result, thereby leaving many communities who make all these contributions from their meagre income poorer.⁸²

In the next phase- from about the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s- the oil-producing communities adopted a strategy that is more community based and mass-oriented that included peaceful or violent demonstrations, grassroots political mobilisation, community disturbances sometimes characterised by forced seizure and occupation of oil facilities, kidnapping of oil workers, sabotage of oil infrastructure and host of other dramatic methods of social protests.⁸³

The third phase of the rise to consciousness by the oil communities started from the mid-1990s to date, and this phase are marked by even more daring exploits and large appetite for violence among newly emerging militant groups who are

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Owugah, L. Phases of Resistance in the Niger Delta, in: Ukeje, C. (ed.) Oil and Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta, Centre for Development and Conflict Management, Ife, 2002, p.8.

⁸³ Ibid.

complementing previous acts with gangsters and cult violence.⁸⁴ Among the communities, this last phase is also witnessing a shift from ordinary demands of infrastructural development to demands of the controversial political issues of resource control, fiscal federalism, greater devolution of power and authority to state and local government than retaining them in some distant federal government, and some even calling for the outright disintegration of Nigeria into smaller parts within ethnic and religious divides. All these are current and urgent issues facing the question of Nigeria as a nation and as a united entity.

3.8. Violent Conflicts and Ethnic Militias in the Region

For over a decade, a lot of domestic and international attention has been drawn to the crisis within the Niger Delta oil communities in Nigeria. Considering the serious socio-ethical challenges posed by crisis to citizens, the state security, social, environmental and economic prosperity, there is a more urgent need to embark on an investigation into the causes of the violence, and perhaps to proffer some socio-ethical ideas towards lasting peace in the region.

One common socio-ethical question common to all the communities of the Niger Delta is that of environmental pollution which forms part of the nature and lives of the people in the region (air, plants, water and soil). The Times Magazine captured the scenario thus:

“The Niger Delta lie over one of the biggest reserves of oil on the planet: 34 billion bbl. of black gold...it is also home of Africa’s poorest people, and some of its worst environmental destruction. There are villages without power, water, health clinics or schools; pipelines that scare the earth; oil slicks that shimmer on rivers; flares that blaze bright and loud, burning off the gas that gushes to the surface along with the sweet crude. So poor are most people who live in the Delta that some are prepared to risk their lives for a bucketful of fuel.”⁸⁵

The argument of the citizens of the region can be seen from the point of view that their fundamental rights and their lives in general are being besieged. The oil exploration projects by multi-national corporations in their ancestral lands play havoc not only to their environment but also to their way of life. They do have a right to their

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Time, Magazine, Special Report: Nigeria, 22.May, 2006.

culture and its development, a right to their ancestral land, the loss of which is for them the loss of life.

Worthy to note is that, the increasing grass root mobilization activities and outbreak of violence in the oil producing communities of Nigeria are traceable to a plethora of grievances felt by the citizens towards oil companies and the Nigerian state as a result of oil exploration activities and suppression of citizens' rights. Their grievances have unfortunately been expressed sometimes in form of violence.⁸⁶

Unfortunately in the Niger Delta, many people participate in ethnic and social activities outside the regulatory frameworks maintained by the Nigerian state. They are constructively engaged in creating and engaging in social formations that lay claim to an autonomy from the state. The collective responses to environmental pollution and resource control leads to the formations of youth associations, area boys, vigilante, and cults. These forms of associational interaction in the Niger Delta takes place within the context of cultural frameworks that precede the colonial enclosures. Before now, many in government often dismiss such groups as neo-traditional and ethnic reactionary. Yet, their historical precedents and their classification as neo-traditional often obscure the activities that take place within these associational forms and their interactions with the state and other forms of collective activity.

In the Niger Delta, youth movements engage in the discourses of environmental pollution and marginalization of the region by drawing on idioms of particularistic community identity and on trajectories of secret societies. In the oil communities, the so-called ethnic militias and other variants contest power through complex and ambiguous conceptions of accountability which are played out in everyday politics within the idioms of monitoring and surveillance, screening and vigilance. These repertoires of accountability and ethnic protectionism operate within a framework of implied or explicit violence. Hence, within these spheres youth groups in the Niger Delta have presented various responses including vigilantism, screening political candidates, monitoring local government expenditures, checking the award of compensation payment by oil firms to local chiefs, threatening oil companies,

⁸⁶ Ukeje, C. *Oil Capital, Ethnic Nationalism and Civil Conflicts in the Niger Delta of Nigeria*, Port-Harcourt, 2004, p.18. (Charles Ugochukwu Ukeje is a Professor of International Relations at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, Nigeria. He is also an expert in environmental ethics and conflict resolution. He has also special interest on issues concerning sustainable development and conflict management in Africa.)

contractors and government agencies for compensations or to complete development programmes etc. In this context of instability of its norms, laws, institutionalized endemic corrupt political system, makes it a privilege opportunity for negotiation, bargaining, bribery and brokerage.

3.9. Hope and Challenges

On the eve of the inauguration of democratic government in May, 1999, after long years of exasperating military rule in Nigeria, there was popular enthusiasm that the appalling social conditions of oil producing communities of the Niger Delta would finally be addressed. Since an authentic democracy is not merely the result of a formal observation of a set of rules but is the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the values that inspire democratic procedures: the dignity of every human person, the respect of human rights, commitment to the common good as the purpose and guiding criterion for political life. If there is no general consensus on these values, the deepest meaning of democracy is lost and its stability is compromised.⁸⁷ There was hope that the new democratic dispensation would open another fresh window of opportunity for working sincerely and actively towards restoring justice and equity, as well as law and order in the Niger Delta.

Even in face of the election and the new democratic government, the oil companies were even reluctant to make a change in the way they operated in the 1990s. They were so secured in their thinking that the military government would protect their interests as usual. The execution of the nine Ogoni activists and environmentalists in 1995 was a turning point, but the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta simply did not know how to make the change.

Another factor militating against the hope of change which the oil companies would have initiated in the Niger Delta was the fact that Nigeria had drifted into the climate of corruption from which the oil companies were not immune. While the head offices of the corporate oil giants in London, The Hague, Houston, Milan and other distant capitals of the world preached and espoused transparencies and the highest ideals of ethics in corporate responsibility, their operations in the Niger Delta were conducted behind a cloak of secrecy. Simply put, the ills of corrupt government and

⁸⁷ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: Values and Democracy, Rome, 2005, No.407.

an increasingly corrupt society pervaded the operations of the major oil companies in the Niger Delta.

The advent of democracy in 1999 even allowed the military and their civilian counterparts to continue their pre-democracy control in the face of an ill equipped, poorly trained and poorly paid police force. So in the face of community unrest, the oil companies in the Niger Delta paid the federal government to supply and station army and troops on site at oil installations. A mind set of 'keep out or kill the locals' soon developed among the people of the oil communities in the Delta.

Generally, the oil companies in the Niger Delta have been resisting the shift to social and ethical conscience that has been following fast on the heels of environmental ethics and sustainability all over the world; rather in the remote villages of the Delta, and away from the prying eyes of the media, they resisted every ray of hope and change. The rules were liberal in Nigeria and government oversight on matters such as environmental practices in the Niger Delta was per functionary.

Sad to note that in their favour, the oil companies who were supposed to know better simply did not know how to make the transition to accommodate the ethical and social dimensions of resource and sustainable development in the Niger Delta. One may argue that as competitors, they simply could not work together to lead the Nigerian government along the path in environmental best practices and sustainable community development.

But the only ray of hope one may say, came after the advent of democracy, with an increasing media access to the Niger Delta and the scrutiny of the oil company operations. Then came a series of more informal reports on the travail of the people, the operations and effects of the oil company on environmental damage, human rights abuses, illegal arms, oil theft- by reputable organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Crisis Group, Catholic Relief Services and Transparency International had laid to bare the failings and the unreliability of the operations of the oil companies in the Niger Delta region.

Before, the oil companies would be more prepared to aggressively deal with instability, protests, community and militant violence, but now they are somewhat looking to the government to address local instability and conflict.

In addressing some of the problems arising from the Niger Delta conflict, the government in 1999 established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as an agency with the sole mandate: Formulate policies and guidelines for the development of the area; tackle ecological and environmental problems arising from oil exploration in the Delta area, and give advice of the prevention and control of oil spillages, gas flaring and environmental pollution; conceive, plan and implement, in accordance with set rules and regulations, projects and programmes for sustainable development in the areas of education, industrialization, agriculture, housing, water supply, electricity and transportation; cause the Niger Delta to be surveyed in order to ascertain measures needed to promote physical development through a well-formulated master plan; implement all measures approved for the development of the Niger Delta by the government; identify factors inhibiting the development of the oil producing communities and assist in the formulation and implementation of policies to ensure sound and efficient management of the resources of the Niger Delta; liaise with the various oil mineral and gas prospecting and producing companies on all matters of pollution prevention and control; and finally, to execute those works and perform such other functions which in the opinion of the commission are required for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta and its people.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, the intervention of the government in the region, through the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was dogged by controversies from birth. By its actions and omissions, the Commission continues to fuel the suspicion that similar attempts to alleviate the plights of oil communities were designed with less than sincere intentions. So the activities of the activities of the commission are generating deep criticisms and resentments similar to those of its predecessors: under-funding, bad management, lopsided distribution of projects, and undue interference by government, poor implementation and quality of projects, inadequate input from local beneficiaries at the stages of project conceptualization, the deepening culture of patronage and graft, and excessive bureaucracy and politics.

Yet after many years of democratic government in Nigeria, not many qualitative changes can be said to have taken place in the lot of the people in the Niger Delta region. In anything, this richly endowed but impoverished region showcases in a very disquieting manner the fact that government policy towards oil communities is nonchalant and cavalier. In this era, a serious crisis of authority is on a steady rise in

⁸⁸ Ekpo, U. *The Niger Delta and Oil politics*, Lagos, 2004, p.80.

the oil region as more and more people lose faith in the social, economic and political order, and have no qualms working assiduously to undermine them. Many of the local communities in the Niger Delta are moving from their previous isolated, informal and ad hoc social mobilisation to more formal, assertive and collective grassroots actions. Their crisis of authority is cultivating a new generation of social tensions and conflicts that are not necessarily tied to a specific space- for instance, rural communities, but are now involving politically established cult groups and gangsters who are unleashing naked violence on rural and urban communities alike. One of the most critical stumbling blocks to peace and stability in the Niger Delta, therefore, comes from the manifest disposition of the government to continue to act as if all is well in the oil region. It is exactly this type of economy with the truth on the part of the government, and those unfulfilled public expectations that the dividend of democracy would come sooner than later that is at the root of violent conflicts in the Niger Delta. With the way things are, the Niger Delta has turned into a gangster's paradise.⁸⁹

Ironically, governance in Nigeria has become the singularly most formidable factor creating and exacerbating conditions of disempowerment, alienation, marginalization and exclusion in the oil region. Channels that citizens would ordinarily follow to articulate their grievances and seek redress are increasingly thwarted by a government that maintains an uncomfortable distance from the very people they should serve and derive legitimacy from. The cumulative outcome is that what may be called the public space or civil society is all the time more emptied of its meaning and purpose, and the sense of accommodation and tolerance. The public space in this case becomes a site for irreconcilable differences by groups. This unfortunate situation has prompted in my view, the sad prediction of the inevitability of continued violence in the oil rich region of the Niger Delta and indeed the entire nation.

Finally, one has to affirm that no matter how unpleasant and dire the general scenario of the Niger Delta is, all hope is not lost. I have observed during the course of this work that the first step towards reclaiming peace and sustainable development would be to allow oil communities a more authoritative and representative voice on matters affecting them. By encouraging and scaling up their participation in identifying their social and developmental priorities, it will become

⁸⁹ Ukeje, C. Oil Communities and Political Violence: The Case of Ijaws in Nigeria's Delta Region. *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, 13:4, Winter, 2001 b, pp.15-36.

easier to restore the lost sense of partnership and cooperation between and among the stakeholders. This process may come rather slowly considering the depth of social decay that is already in place, but at least it would place the people and their communities at the centre of stage of democratic and developmental initiative proposed for the region, and at the same time accommodate considerable and sustainable investment in human and social capital in the region. I shall at the later part of this work proffer certain goals, which I think when properly implemented, would open even wider windows of opportunity for the creative of public order not only in the region, but to Nigeria and even third world countries in general.

From feelings in these oil communities of the Niger Delta, it is obvious that grassroots mobilisation and violence are unlikely to end in a long time considering the fact that social values among oil communities have become severely truncated and twisted beyond recognition. There are no hard and fast rules I can here suggest about the best ways to redress the long list of social and developmental tragedies facing the oil communities and the Nigerian society in general. But I have also from my research observed that a serious and genuine commitment to expand and deepen good governance and democratic participation by government and the people would certainly set a good tone. Worthy of noting also is that only genuine democracy can force a radical transformation of attitudes and actions of government and multinational oil companies from the present militaristic understanding of law and order in the Niger Delta and in the nation as a whole. Due to this excessive preoccupation, other germane social, political, economic, community, environmental and cultural aspects of security are ignored or lost. The situation has been frustrating opportunities to close rank with and construct bridges of sustainable development, understanding, and rule of law, harmony and cooperation in the whole of the Niger Delta.

A final point to be observed is that, no matter how bleak the prospects for peace and stability may seem in the Nigerian social and political system, only a genuinely committed democratic government stands a better chance than the military, to constructively rethink the past and present policy failures that has hindered towards achieving the required sustainable development that can make Nigeria a better civil society.

3.10. Why the Conflicts in the Region?

There are enormous reports on the international and local scenes media on the growing insurgency by armed militias in the Niger Delta. The roots of the Niger Delta conflict lie first of all in the fight against the degradation of their environment by the oil multinational companies, and secondly the struggle for self-determination, local autonomy and democracy of the ethnic minorities in the region, which according to Cyril Obi, goes as far back as the second decade of the twentieth century.⁹⁰

Concerning the reasons for the conflict in the Niger Delta, one may also attempt to see it based on the serious threat environmental degradation posed even to the religious and cultural heritage of the people. Some traditional religionists in this region acknowledge that the very harmony of their society depends a lot and derives from that harmony which exists between the environment and man. Their belief system is such that man and this environment (the Niger Delta environment) are intimately bound to one another, as is the accompanying belief that the natural world is alive, and spiritually replete. The communities have a more holistic faith and a sense of Mother Earth's sacrality which views unbecoming treatment of nature not only as immoral but also as abomination and desecration of the earth; and more still as a religious offence. Okonta and Douglas observed the impact of Shell's activities on sacred creek, forests, ponds and lakes. Shell contractors they continued, have uprooted graves, killed sacred animals, desecrated shrines and sacred places.⁹¹ The villagers fear that they will have to move to another location or faced with extinction in a land so mangled by Shell that it can no longer support them as it once supported their ancestors. They lamented that: "if we are to make our offerings at a new place, the gods would not know us. We would not have the rivers or the sacred trees. We would not know the land and the land would not know us:"⁹² Thus, they cannot find meaning in life by the mediated machines of the oil companies, and neither can they furnish them with their religious symbols. This could hardly be surprising within an agro-based culture like that of the traditional villagers of the

⁹⁰ Obi, C. Nigeria's Niger Delta: Understanding the Complex Drivers of Violent Oil-related Conflict, in: African Development, Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa, 2009, Vol. XXXIV, no.2, p.114.

⁹¹ Okonta, I., & Douglas, O. Where the Vultures Feast, Shell, Human Rights and Oil, London, 2003, p.82.

⁹² Ibid.p83 (Ike Okonta is a social ethicist, an environmental expert on the Niger Delta. He won the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize in 1998. Oronto Douglas is a Human rights lawyer and also an expert on the Niger Delta environment. He was a member of the legal team that represented Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995. Both authors are on the management committee of Environmental Rights Action of the Niger Delta).

Niger Delta. So animists and traditional religionists in the Delta have never failed to mount fierce resistance to the destruction of their environment by the multinational oil companies.

Furthermore, the creation of Nigeria by the British as their colony in 1914 consigned the people of the Niger Delta to the status of ethnic minorities in relation to the numerically preponderant neighbouring ethnic groups which dominated political life in what later became the Western and Eastern regions of the country. The successive institutionalization of revenue sharing and power distribution along regional lines in Nigeria today tended to reinforce the politicization of ethnic identity and its mobilization in the struggles for access to power and resources. On this basis, smaller groups defined as 'ethnic minorities' tended to lose out, while the dominant ethnic groups asserted power at the regional and the national level.

The initial reaction of the Niger Delta minorities was to protest against the perceived 'majoritarian stronghold of other ethno-regional blocs' over power and resources by forming political parties representing their interests and seeking local autonomy through state or region creation in the context of Nigeria federalism. Obi observed that these initial reactions of the Niger Delta region caused the creation of political parties that included Cross River Ogoja State Movement (COR), the Midwest Movement, and the Niger Delta Congress (NDC).⁹³ Although, they did not succeed in their quest for the creation of new states before Nigeria's independence in 1960, the post-independence crisis that culminated in civil war 1967 and 1970 provided new opportunities.⁹⁴

Shortly before the eruption of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war in June 1967, the three ethnic regions were abolished and replaced with twelve states, of which ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta had three. During the earlier part of the war, the Biafran forces stake claim to the oil in the Niger Delta and demanded the payment of royalties and taxes by oil companies to the Biafran government. Heinrich Bergstresser also observes that:

„Der Zugang zu den Ölfeldern war sicherlich ein wichtiger Grund für den Bürgerkrieg, aber auch nicht der einzige und vielleicht auch nicht der entscheidende. Als am Vorabend der Krise die Ölkonzerne einen Teilbetrag der fälligen Konzessionsgebühren für das erste Halbjahr 1967 an Biafra überwiesen, an die Bundesregierung in Lagos dagegen nichts, war dies der letzte Anstoß, die Truppen

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Bergstresser H. Nigeria: Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea, Frankfurt a. Main, 2010, p.51.

in Richtung Biafra marschieren und die Waffen sprechen zu lassen. Das Sterben auf den Schlachtfeldern Biafra im Südosten des Landes konnte beginnen.“⁹⁵

In response, the Nigerian government imposed a naval blockade on the Bonny and Port Harcourt oil terminals and attacked Biafran forces in the Niger Delta. Thus, the Nigerian civil war was to some extent an oil war and it was logical the victorious federal army went on to establish its full control over the oil during and after the war. In this way, oil became the main object in the acrimonious politics of revenues allocation after the end of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war.

By the 1970s, the Niger Delta had become the main source of oil and gas, and as a result the new basis of the Nigerian state (replacing agriculture), accounting for the greater percentage of the national revenue and of export earnings. In spite of the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta having their ‘own’ states, the federal government, largely controlled by their political elite from dominant ethnic groups, had seized monopoly control of the collection and distribution of oil revenues. Just as the states were created by military fiat, federal monopoly of oil was similarly established through Decree No. 51 of 1962 and Decree No.9 of 1971. Apart from the state creation exercise, and the centralization of power over oil, the revenue allocation principle of derivation was progressively changed to reduce the share of oil producing communities of the Niger Delta from 50 percent in 1966 to 1.5 percent in the 1990s.⁹⁶

The progressive reduction of the derivation principle – which provided for revenue allocation in proportion to the contribution to the federal purse by each state – and the introduction of the Distributive Pool Account (DPA) or federation account that emphasized the ‘allocative’ principles of population size and need (and de-emphasized derivation), was viewed an injustice by the ethnic minorities, particularly in the context of decades of marginalization and neglect of the Niger Delta by past governments. Hence the struggle between the oil minorities of the Niger Delta and the non-oil producing majority groups and the Nigerian government became the object of politics of controlling oil revenue or resource control.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Obi, C. Nigeria’s Niger Delta: Understanding the Complex Drivers of Violent Oil-related Conflict, in: African Development, Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa, 2009, Vol. XXXIV, no.2, p.115. Also in: Saro-Wiwa, K. A Month and a Day: Detention Dairy, London, 1995, p.20. (Professor Cyril Obi is an eminent social ethicist, and an environmentalist from the Niger Delta. He is a Research Fellow, Nigeria Institute of International Affairs, senior visiting Researcher, Nordic African Institute and a visiting Professor, department of Peace and Conflict Resolution, University of Uppsala, Sweden).

The campaign (non-violent until recently), which in Nigeria's political lexicon is referred to as 'resource control' is based on the demand for self-determination to control the resources within the 'territory' of the Niger Delta, compensation for damages inflicted upon the people and their environment by oil production (pollution, degradation, loss of livelihoods). Heinrich Bergstresser made this observation about the degradation of the environment in the Niger Delta:

"Nigeria vernichtet seit 40 Jahren systematisch einen beträchtlichen Teil seiner natürlichen Energierostoffe und zählt somit zugleich global zu den größten Umweltsündern der Welt. Denn die Konzerne fackeln das bei der Förderung in Nigeria anfallende ölgebundene Erdgas, das, sogenannte Associated Gas einfach ab, statt es zu reinigen und zu nutzen...Die orangefarbenen Flammen scheinen unter dem dunklen Sternenhimmel am Äquator wie ein Leuchtf Feuerwerk der Superlative, vergleichbar einem ‚Ewigen Licht‘, mit dem sie die Nacht zum Tage machen. Gleichzeitig verursachen diese Fackeln einen fast unerträglichen Lärm, verpesten die Luft, schleudern riesige Mengen von CO² und Methangas in die Atmosphäre. Der Ruß fällt zurück auf die Felder und Gewässer und dringt mit zeitlicher Verzögerung ein in die Nahrungskette und verschärft die bereits bestehende prekäre Versorgungslage der großen Bevölkerungsmehrheit."⁹⁷

So the conflict in the Niger Delta draws its rationale from the view that the control of oil by a federal government controlled by elites from the dominant (non-oil producing) ethnic groups is both unjust and explains why the Niger Delta region has suffered decades of neglect, characterized not only by marginalization in relation to oil revenues, but also with regards to poor quality infrastructure, high unemployment rates (among the predominantly youthful population), high levels of HIV/AIDS infection rates and high levels of poverty. The federal control of oil among the people of the oil-producing communities is also perceived as the result of an iniquitous political arrangement that enables the ethnic majorities to 'colonize', exploit and persecute the ethnic minorities, who they feel 'cannot pose any real threat to the federal hegemony'⁹⁸

In Nigeria, the mid-1980s also coincided with the visible radicalization of the language of politics, especially from below, among existing and/or newly emerged civil society groups. This radicalization of civil society groups occurred against the background of the reluctance by the military oligarchy, having ruthlessly held to power continuously since 1984, to conduct general elections, enthrone civilian democracy and withdraw to their barracks, according to the popular wishes.

⁹⁷ Bergstresser H. Nigeria: Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea, Frankfurt a. Main, 2010, p.22.

⁹⁸ Okonta, I. When Citizens Revolt: Nigerian Elites, Big Oil and the Ogoni Struggle for Self-Determination, Trenton, NJ, 2008, p.12.

Essentially, the groups coalesced around popular protesters from Niger Delta against authoritarian military rule; showing preference for plural democratic reforms and good governance, as well as transparency and accountability on fiscal matters. As unexpected outcome of this process was the groundswell of a coalition of civil society based anti-military, pro-democracy, pro-human and environmental/minority rights advocacy clamoring for the expansion of the democratic space and respect for the wishes of the people. With time, the radicalization of these groups began to permeate every segment of the civil society, ultimately elevating the language of violence into a major national discourse.⁹⁹

So as oil extraction intensified and harsh military policies intensified, tension heightened among oil-producing ethnic minority communities that could no longer be contained. This could be seen, in practical terms, in the inability of traditional government structures and institutions to effectively contain the anomic outbursts of youths who increasingly involved in socially destructive activities. Ultimately, oil communities in the Niger Delta became veritable terrain for contesting not just political space and access to resources, but also one for resisting authoritarian forms of state rule and accumulation.¹⁰⁰

It is important to insert the important caveat here that in a complex socio-ethnic formation as Nigeria, violent enterprises may tend to coalesce around popular discontent, but popular discontents do not automatically and invariably lead to the outbreak of violent conflicts. As Welch rightly noted, collective political violence is not a spontaneous, unilateral projection of people experiencing discontentment. Often times, there is a value-added undertone that can only be captured by looking at the cumulative experiences that people live through on daily basis or over a period of time. At the intervening gaps in-between maintaining the status quo and the outbreak of full-scale rebellion, therefore, are several other forms of socio-political expressions ranging from impotence to co-optation, frustration, banditry/brigandage, heightened insecurity, low-intensity, demonstrations and anomie, insurgency and full-scale rebellion.¹⁰¹ The usefulness of this approach becomes obvious in the sense that instead of focusing on the nature and scope of the discontentment itself,

⁹⁹ The cumulative of the above prompted the statement credited to the Nigerian former Information Minister, Professor Jerry Gana that “the violent military dictatorships in the country over the years had turned the populace into angry lot ready to fight over the slightest provocation” in: *The Guardian* online, May 2, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Obi, C. *Globalization and Local Resistance: The case of the Ogoni Versus Shell*, in: *Political Economy*, 2: 1, 1997.

¹⁰¹ Welche, C. *The Ogoni and Self-determination: Increasing Violence in Nigeria*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33:4, 1996, pp.635-649.

it may be rewarding to probe the process and structural conditions that encourage the 'politicization of discontent'.

Various Niger Delta communities expressed the view that the control of their oil resources by outsiders was akin to 'internal colonialism' and demanded for the right to control their own resource, oil. Such demands were largely ignored by various military regimes that also repressed such protests. It was not until the first quarter of 1999 that the derivation principle was increased to 13 percent.¹⁰² The increase was in response to international campaigns and local protests by ethnic minorities, and constituted strategy of the new democratic regime of winning legitimacy on the basis of attending to the grievances of oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta. Part of the calculation was also to demobilize the protest groups by providing patronage to the local elite, co-opt the leadership of the protest and activist groups and create the conditions for the operations of the oil industry by stemming the tide of restiveness.

Unfortunately, the result of the agitation by the people of the Niger Delta has been the exact opposite, leading to the militarization of the Niger Delta resistance and escalating violence in the region, partly as a result of worsening socioeconomic conditions, the co-optation of some armed groups by local politicians, and growing frustration and discontent among the youth that democracy had not addressed the roots of their grievances, and demands for improved welfare in the context of the continued extraction of wasting non-replaceable oil resources from the Niger Delta.

Another issue as Cyril Obi noted that is closely related to the discontent fuelled by the feelings that the Niger Delta has been severely short-changed by other ethnic groups that control the federal government and oil is the issue of ownership of land. One of the legacies of military rule in Nigeria was the 1978 Land Use Decree, later the Land Use act, and a host of related laws that transferred the ownership of land from communities to the state governments, and gave the latter the power to use land for (oil) 'development' purposes.¹⁰³ Furthermore, what evidently compounds the institutional disadvantage of the oil-producing communities and the stultification of their customary land rights as Omeje notes is the fact that the 1978 Act denies even the courts the jurisdiction to inquire into matters of compensation relating to the provisions of the Act. Thus, not only can the state government acquire communal land, it also determines what compensation is paid for surface rights: i.e., the things

¹⁰² Obi., C. 2009, p.116.

¹⁰³ Ibid. P.117.

on the land, buildings, shrines, trees, crops, etc.; and to whom it is paid. Therefore, the Act has been largely seen as yet another ploy to dispossess the Niger Delta people of their oil-rich land. The other dimension is that state control of land has also fed into the politics of compensation (payments), which has become a source of intra- and inter-community tension and conflict in the region.¹⁰⁴

3.11. From Local Protests to Militarization of Local Resistance

Given the nature of the political economy of oil in Nigeria, the transnational production of oil is underscored by a Nigerian state and the oil multinational companies alliance, which in the context of the Niger Delta is being confronted by protests and local resistance.

By the late 1970s, various ethnic communities in the Niger Delta and elite groups had begun to mobilize support for a peaceful protest against the oil companies and neglect by the government. These took the form of petitions, reports and articles in local newspapers.

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)¹⁰⁵ moved the struggle to its next phase in the 1990s when it presented the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) to the government, demanding local autonomy and control of its oil, and waging an effective international campaign against oil companies on account of their exploitative and polluting activities in the Niger Delta which threatened the survival of the people.¹⁰⁶ However, the struggle and revolution of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni was literally crushed largely through the use of state military force, and the hanging after a controversial trial and verdict, of nine of its leading members, including the writer and minority Rights Campaigner, Ken Saro-Wiwa, in November 1995.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Omeje, K. Oil Conflict in Nigeria: Contending Issues and Perspectives of the Local Niger Delta People, in *New Political Economy*, 2005, Vol. 10, No.3.

¹⁰⁵ The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) ist eine basisorientierte, ethnisch definierte politische Bewegung im Niger-Delta, die geschickte alle vorhandenen Clan- und Dorfstrukturen nutzte, um die Menschen individuell anzusprechen und zu mobilisieren.

¹⁰⁶ Saro-Wiwa, K. *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary*, London, 1995, p.18.

¹⁰⁷ Im November 1995 starb Ken Saro-Wiwa zusammen mit seinen acht Mitstreitern am Galgen. Auch internationale Proteste hatten seinen Schauprozess und diese Morde nicht verhindern können. Er war Bürgerrechtler und Umweltaktivist international bekannt. Mit seinem Tod wurden auch die Hoffnungen und Erwartungen auf eine friedliche Protest- und Reformbewegung im Niger-Delta abrupt begraben, mit verheerenden Folgen für das ganze Land. Cf. *Stuttgarter Zeitung* Nr. 123, Samstag. 30. Mai 2009. Also: Bergstresser, H. *Nigeria: Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea*, Frankfurt a. Main, 2010, p.31.

The Niger-Delta region to show that it meant business, the Ijaw Youth Council in December 1998 under the slogan 'Operation Climate Change' demanded that all oil companies should leave the Niger-Delta before the end of December 1998. Like MOSOP, it mobilized the youth and ordinary people, by drawing upon local Niger-Delta idioms and a culture of resistance. Part of this included the use of *Egbesu*: literally the Niger Delta god of war, but whose real significance lay deep in the people's cosmology as a symbol of spiritual protection (invincibility) for the Niger-Delta, when fighting a 'just war' for liberation. Many protesters were injured in the repression that followed; and it was in this state of the repression of the IYC activists that Nigeria returned to elected democratic rule in May 1999.

After the 1999 elections, the security force remained in the Niger Delta, but assumed a rather low profile. However, when a criminal gang that had held an oil producing community captive killed some police officers, the Nigeria army invaded the community ostensibly to apprehend the criminals, but it later took the form of a punitive expedition, which razed the entire community save for a few buildings, and left thousand injured, homeless or dead.¹⁰⁸

The violence of environmental degradation and resource extraction in the Niger Delta by the Nigerian-oil alliance has dialectically resulted in the violence of local resistance. However, it must be noted that the very nature of such dialectics is complex, and sometimes contradictory, as the various forces find expression at different levels and alliances are built, destroyed and reconstituted in various ways. So apart from these groups, there has been a proliferation of other armed groups or 'cults'.

As the case may be, the most potent militant group engaging in local resistance, but targeting global audience, is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). MEND has launched daring raids into fortified oil-installations onshore and offshore, detonated explosive devices near oil compounds, and fought pitched battles on land and at sea with the Nigeria's military forces, and published its activities in various global media. The group has effectively attracted international attention to the level of environmental decay and the plight of the Niger Delta region and to its resistance campaign through the taking hostage of foreign oil workers, demonstrating the inability of Nigerian security forces to stop its attacks and

¹⁰⁸ Obi, C. Nigeria's Niger Delta: Understanding the Complex Drivers of Violent Oil-related Conflict, in: African Development, Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa, 2009, Vol. XXXIV, no.2, p.115.

sabotage of oil installations. Using the internet to send e-mails and images to the world's leading news agencies and local newspapers, taking journalists to its camps in the swamps of the Niger Delta,¹⁰⁹ MEND had tried to distance itself from the local political class and the ransoming of foreign hostages, and tapping into local idioms, symbols and grievances to embed itself in the people's consciousness. It has however gained most attention internationally by its threat to 'cripple the Nigerian oil exports'

While it has targeted foreign oil workers, it has released all such hostages after a period, all unharmed, giving credence to the view that they are used to draw international attention to the injustices in the region, seen as an important aspect in globalizing local resistance in the Niger Delta. In an interview, Jomo Gbomo, the spokesperson of MEND, elucidated on the objectives of the group:

"The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is an amalgam of all arm bearing groups in the Niger Delta fighting environmental degradation and for the control of oil revenue by the indigenes of the Niger Delta who have had relatively no benefit from the exploitation of our mineral resources by the Nigerian government and oil companies over the last fifty years."¹¹⁰

So it appears that MEND's anger is against the government and the oil companies, which are held responsible for the plunder and pollution of the Niger Delta environment. In its recent phase, the politics of local resistance has been decisively violent. The new trend in the Niger Delta is also feeding into the global securitization of the region and the surrounding Gulf of Guinea, whereby the international community is concerned about its energy security interests and possible effect on the entire the African continent.

3.12. Reactions from Government

It is a common knowledge in the field of social ethics that human dignity is violated by crimes such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, murder, genocide; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as a free and responsible

¹⁰⁹ Junger, S. Crude Awakening, in: The Observer Magazine, 15 April 2007.

¹¹⁰ Ross, B. News Exclusive: Online Interview with a Terrorist, ABC News, January 3, 2007, in: Obi, C., 2009, p.112.

persons: all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury.¹¹¹

Because of long years of military rule in Nigeria and coupled with ill-conceived policies, the Nigerian Government could not implement the necessary laws governing the oil operations as stated in the Nigerian Constitution. The lapses in the system led to more unethical cases of gas flaring; oil spillages and forest encroachment in the region that destroys the means of sustaining the citizens and pollute their environment. Unfortunately, successive Nigerian Government made no huge attempts to alleviate the deteriorating situation by way of providing basic infrastructures. The United Nations report on human development in the Niger Delta region reflected on this situation thus: “the vast resources from an international industry have barely touched pervasive local poverty”¹¹²

Watts also noted that if Bayelsa State (this is a state in Nigeria, and the highest crude oil producing state in the Niger Delta region) were to be a independent nation of its own; it would according to its Human Development Indices (HDI) be ranked roughly 160th poorest nation in the world.¹¹³ He went further to present that literacy rate in the core oil producing states are barely 40 percent, the proportion of primary school children enrolled is (according to Niger Delta Environmental Survey (NDES)) 39 percent.¹¹⁴ So the indifference and sometimes the failure of the Nigerian Government to fulfil its duty to the citizens led to the demand of resource control by the people of the region; since the Government cannot fulfil their responsibility in the protection of their rights.

There is this fear and belief in the Nigerian government circle that oil revenue is under serious threat as a result of community violence and so the government must embark on extensive and brutal policing of the region. Such a heavy security presence continues to have severe implications for the civic and associational life, and also undermines human rights, law and order. In between these two extremes of

¹¹¹ Ibid. No.27.

¹¹² Cf. Watts, M. Curse of Black Gold: 50 years of Oil in the Niger Delta, in: Watt, M., (ed.) Sweet and Sour, Brooklyn, 2008, p.37

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

appeasement and coercion, government actively pursues other divide-and-rule policies with emphasis on the co-optation of few influential elites.¹¹⁵

„Aus...Ordnung- und nicht aus der Willkür und dem Willen zur Macht – gewinnt die Autorität ihre Verbindlichkeit und ihre eigene moralische Berechtigung, und sie hat die Pflicht, diese Ordnung in Konkrete Taten umzusetzen, die der Verwirklichung des Gemeinwohls dienen.“¹¹⁶

Ironically, government does not seem to recognise that at those times that it prescribes punishments against restive oil communities, it is also advertising its loss of putative administrative and political capacities to extract obedience from citizens without necessarily using force. Each time the State employs force, it is inadvertently lowering its rear guard for criticism over lack of self-restraint and goodwill in handling sensitive issues affecting oil communities. It is also unfortunate that the much envisaged demilitarization of the oil region of Nigeria has not been carried out after several years the government promised to implement it. On the contrary, the Niger Delta region is easily the most militarized part of Nigeria today with virtually every area covered by soldiers. This phenomenon has become very common but very few people in government and within the oil companies have demonstrated care about the grave and far-reaching social and ethical implications for the region. Indeed, the daily notoriety of security agents in the region has become a major source of worry and social tension among their reluctant hosts. Even fewer of them appreciate that there is a direct linkage between this excessive militarization and weapons proliferation and abusive usage in the Niger Delta.

In view of the above assertion, it is quite clear that there are few signs that the conditions and circumstances causing social disorders taking place in the oil region of Nigeria may not reduce anytime in the near future to afford stakeholders an opportunity to sheath their swords of mistrust and hostility and embrace dialogue. It is clear that the major stakeholders – local communities, multinational oil companies and the Nigerian government- are ever pushing themselves into positions that may not permit sufficient leverage room for genuine reconciliation. While oil communities in the Delta are persistent in demanding that multinational oil companies add value to their lives by sowing positively into host communities based on defined home-

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Op.Cit. No.396.

grown priorities, oil companies insist that they are not in any position to take up municipal responsibilities that are strictly speaking the prerogative of government. Government, on its part, has been unrelenting that it cannot over burden itself with only the problems of development in the Niger, given other pressing and competing developmental commitments in other sectors.

As conflicts between the oil companies and the local people in the Niger Delta escalated, a frequent response to anti-oil protests and militancy in the Niger Delta was the use of repressive security measures. Anti-Shell protests by the Ogonis after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders, for instance, were met with violence by the government, involving extra-judicial killings, rapes, arrests and flogging of protesters. It was also observed that:

„Am 4. Februar feuerten Soldaten- zunächst mit Tränengas, später auch mit scharfer Munition- auf etwa 300 Menschen, die in Escravos im Bundesstaat Delta vor einem Ölterminal der Firma Chevron Nigeria demonstrierten. Einer der Protestteilnehmer, der Fischer Bawo Ajeboghuku, wurde von einem Schuss getroffen und starb an den Folgen, mindestens 30 weitere Menschen wurden verletzt. Die Demonstranten aus der Gemeinde Ugborodo erklärten, Chevron Nigeria habe sich nicht an eine im Jahr 2002 mit der Gemeinde getroffene Vereinbarung gehalten damals hatte Chevron der Gemeinde Ugborodo als Gegenleistung für ein ‚störungsfreies Betriebsumfeld‘ Arbeitsplätze und Entwicklungsprojekte versprochen. Soweit bekannt, sorgten weder die Zentralregierung noch Chevron Nigeria für eine gründliche und unabhängige Untersuchung des Vorfalles.“¹¹⁷

In dealing with anti-oil protests, the authorities used regular units of army, the navy as well as the police. The amnesty international further narrated that:

„Bei einer Razzia von Soldaten im Bundesstaat Bayelsa wurden am 19. Februar 2006 mindestens 17 Einwohner getötet und etwas 80 Prozent der Gebäude dem Erdboden gleich gemacht. Berichten zufolge kam es ferner zu zwei Vergewaltigungen. Angesehene Bewohner von Odioma erklärten, man habe sie geschlagen und gezwungen, Sand zu essen. Die Razzia sollte der Festnahme von Anführern einer bewaffneten Bürgerwehr dienen, die angeblich für die Tötung von zwölf Personen im Januar verantwortlich waren. Die Justiz des Bundesstaates leitet eine Untersuchung der Vorgänge ein, gab jedoch keine Ergebnisse bekannt.“¹¹⁸

In addition to assistance from the state security services, oil companies in the Niger Delta maintain their own security forces. These are drawn from the Nigerian Police and perform duties at oil installations. Paid by the oil companies, they are known as ‘Shell Police’ or ‘Mobile Police’. The best evidence on security co-operation comes

¹¹⁷ Amnesty International Jahresbericht 2006, Nigeria, Frankfurt am Main, 2006, p.343.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

from the court case XM Federal Limited v. Shell,¹¹⁹ in which arms supplier sued Shell over breach of contract in the Federal High Court of Nigeria.¹²⁰ Inter alia, the court case revealed that the Nigeria government provides policemen to guard oil installations. Evidence from the court case XM Federal Limited v. Shell also revealed that Shell was negotiating to import weapons into Nigeria between 1994 and 1996 in breach of arms embargo. According to evidence, Shell sought tenders from Nigerian arms suppliers to procure weapons for them. Nigeria's Police Chief approved the arms purchase under pressure from Shell's managers. Following revelations in the British press on Shell's arms dealings in 1996, a Shell International spokesman later admitted that one of the three bids for arms purchases had been selected by Shell in March 1995, although the arms deal had not gone ahead.¹²¹

Oil companies, of course, have a legitimate right to protect themselves against violent attacks, particularly in an unstable region such as the Niger Delta. But it should be noted also that most protests in Nigeria have been peaceful. It is likely that over-reliance on security forces can lead to unnecessary bloodshed. A typical example can be seen from the inquiry into massacre of people in an oil-community in the Niger Delta called Umuechem. On the 30 and 31 October 1990, local youths from this community demonstrated against Shell. Shell had been operating in the area from the late 1950s, resulting in the pollution of a stream, the destruction of farm crops and other losses of property. The community had received little or no compensation, while villagers called for social amenities such as the provision of electricity. Shell did not respond to the dissatisfied community members, but decided to rely upon security protection. On 29 October, J.R. Udofia, Shell's Eastern Division manager, wrote to the Police Chief in Rivers State informing him of an 'impending attack' on the oil facilities allegedly planned for the next day. Udofia not only appealed for security protection but explicitly requested the assistance of a unit of the dreaded Mobile Police, which was well-known for its brutality. Udofia asked the Police Chief to 'urgently provide us with security protection preferably Mobile Police

¹¹⁹ Reported Suit No. FHC/L/CS/849/95 in the Federal High Court Lagos, Cf.: Frynas, J.G., Op.Cit. p.50.

¹²⁰ The first plaintiff was XM Federal, an international arms dealer. The second plaintiff was Humanitex Nigeria Limited, a Nigerian arms dealer approved by the government. Humanitex was employed by XM Federal as security adviser and its Nigerian agent. Shell ordered arms from Humanitex but later withdrew its order, most probably because it considered the arms too expensive. Brian Anderson, Shell's managing director, wrote in a letter in September 1994: 'We consider this quotation to be excessive, based upon our own investigations from other sources of supply'. (Letter from Brian Anderson, Shell's Chairman and Managing Director, to Alhaji Coomassie, Inspector-General of Nigeria Police, 12 September 1994) The arms supplier subsequently filed a lawsuit. In: Frynas, J.G. Ibid.

¹²¹ The Observer, Lagos, 11 February 1996.

Force at this location'¹²² in the course of the next few days, the Mobile Police moved in with teargas and gunfire, killing around 80 people and destroying almost 500 houses. In the wake of the incident, a judicial commission of inquiry was set up, and it found out that there was no imminent threat of attack and that the demonstrators were neither violent nor armed.¹²³ This incident perhaps illustrates the oil companies' over-reliance on security protection in dealing with conflicts in the village communities.

Any explanation from the perspective of this work of the oil companies' over-reliance on security protection must remain speculative. One of the likely explanations is the close relationship between the government and the oil companies. As previously observed, foreign oil companies later started forming joint ventures with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Nigeria's state-owned oil corporation, and have many formal and informal agreements with the state agencies ranging from questions of land acquisition to the purchase of arms for the police. As earlier noted, the oil companies and the Nigerian state maintain close ties of co-operation in terms of security arrangements. Furthermore, oil company managers sometimes become Nigerian bureaucrats, and vice versa. The evidence would suggest that the oil companies have much closer ties with the Nigerian administration than with village communities. By implication, it has perhaps been much more convenient for a manager to summon the police or the military than engage in negotiations with the local people. This reliance on security forces is likely to have influenced the breeding of militant groups and fuelled conflicts between the government, companies and the village communities.

The militarization of the Niger Delta region dialectically fed into violent resistance by the local youths, and so reinforcing the view that the government and the multi-national oil companies would neither listen to the people's demand nor respect their rights. Apart from the perceived 'failure' of peaceful protest to effect a change in the attitude of the government-oil alliance towards the Niger Delta, violent mobilization within and between local communities, alongside elite factionalization became source of empowerment for many youths in the area. They adopted violence as their only way of survival in the region, pressuring the local elite and resisting the

¹²² Rivers State of Nigeria: Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Umuechem Disturbances under the Chairmanship of Hon. Justice Opubo Inko-Tariah, Port-Harcourt, 1990, Appendix G.

¹²³ Ibid.

predatory instincts of the state-oil alliance and its local allies. This fed into a proliferation of militants and criminal gangs in the region, a development that partly led to the blurring of the boundaries between violent criminality and resistance.¹²⁴

The current dynamics in the Niger Delta suggest a considerable difficulty in differentiating the upsurge in criminality from that in violent resistance. One can today identify three types of militias in the Niger Delta: insurgent, deviant insurgent and criminal armed groups. The insurgents are described as the fighting arms of the Niger Delta mobilization against the government-oil alliance and they are mainly concerned about the Niger Delta resource control project. Insurgent deviant groups either evolve into insurgent militias or break away from them. In some cases they evolve from campus fraternities. They are led by local 'warlords', operating at the street, community or ethnic level, with ties to members of the ruling elite, who deploy them for a mix of political and quasi-criminal activities, including oil theft. Criminal armed groups exist basically for self-enrichment and engage in violent crimes. These categories though useful, are not exhaustive, as individuals and groups flow across the boundaries between one category and the other, based on exigent calculations and complex in-group dynamics that are difficult to capture.¹²⁵

To illustrate this point, in 1999, some politicians in the Niger Delta were able to penetrate and sponsor some of these armed groups in the region to unleash violence upon, and intimidate their political opponents and voters. However, after winning power, the politicians abandoned these armed groups. The groups were believed to have turned their attention to trans-national illegal oil bunkering networks, collecting tolls on the trade, providing security to oil bunkering crews, selling stolen oil or operating illegal oil refineries whose products were sold below market prices.¹²⁶

By involving themselves in illegal oil bunkering and getting payoffs from local political patrons or oil companies, militia leaders gained access to funds with which they stockpiled sophisticated weapons, built camps and recruited and trained fighters.

¹²⁴ Obi, C. Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance and Conflicts in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta, in: Canadian Journal of development Studies, 2010, 30, nos. 1-2, p.229.

¹²⁵ Ikelegbe, A. Popular and criminal violence as instruments of struggle: The case of youth militia in the Niger Delta region, Paper presented on Workshop on Violent Conflict in the Niger Delta, Oslo, 2008, August 18-19.

¹²⁶ Obi, C. 2010, p.229.

They also gained autonomy from their erstwhile political patrons, giving them space to pursue alternative agendas.

Finally, the trans-national oil based accumulation of capital, which translates into the dispossession of the Niger Delta people and their environment, dialectically feeds into violent resistance and conflict in the oil-rich region. Just as the global demand for oil continue to rise and global access to oil has become of foremost strategic interest in the present world, the stakes in ensuring uninterrupted supply of oil from this restive region will continue to rise. This will likely reinforce the local drive to resist tighter control of oil by the Nigerian state and the multinationals to the exclusion of the Niger Delta people for a derivation-based redress in Nigeria's fiscal federalism.

Yet the Nigerian government has remained intent on justifying and legitimizing a military solution to the Niger Delta conflict. But there are fears and concerns that the Nigerian state which is for now being held captive by corrupt ruling elites deliver on forcibly mediating the crisis or reining in the militants through the offer of money to buy them over. Some hardliners within the Nigerian military top brass and the ruling elite continue to see the militants in the Niger Delta as criminals and terrorists who should be crushed or bought off rather than genuinely addressing the roots of local grievances. Their concern is for the preservation of the balance of power in favour of the government and the oil companies, to guarantee the conditions for optimal oil exploitation and accumulation in the region. This runs counter to the logic behind the demands of the people in the Niger Delta who are agitating the pollution of their environment and for a fair share of the resources in their land.

At stake is both the quest of the Niger Delta people for social justice, tackle the problem of pollution of their environment and the resistance to the oil companies power relations hinged on oil extraction, which alienates and impoverishes the people and their environment. The prospects for change rests upon the foundation of a democratic multi-ethnic society that can guarantee a sustainable development, the good of the people, under a visionary and committed leadership backed by progressive social movements, to face the challenges of the equitable restructuring of the Nigerian federal state and reversing the asymmetries and injustices embedded in the exploitation of the environment and oil capitalism.

In view of the fact the conflict in the Niger Delta drastically has affected oil production output in Nigeria and its implications on the nation's economy which is highly dependent on oil, the Nigerian Government horridly packaged a non-violent path at resolving the conflict in the region.

„Die massive Militärschläge im Mai und Juni 2009 zeigten zweifellos Wirkung. In die Enge getrieben weitete MEND seine Kampfzone jedoch aus und zerstörte im Juli das große Treibstofflager Atlas Cove Jetty Deport in Lagos. Dieser Schlag gegen die Wirtschaftsmetropole saß, und unter Politikern, Sicherheitskräften, Bankern, Akademikern, Gewerkschaftern, Managern und Ölgesellschaften machten sich Fassungslosigkeit, Ratlosigkeit und auch Angst breit. Plötzlich standen Wohlstand und Lebensstil, Luxus und Weltläufigkeit der Eliten auf dem Spiel, alles, was das ständig sprudelnde Öl und die Gasvorkommen bisher garantiert hatten.“¹²⁷

Commenting further on this new non-violent approach to the conflict undertaken by the Nigerian Government Heinrich Bergstresser stated that:

„So rückten nach diesem schweren Zwischenfall und den Gemetzeln der zurückliegenden Wochen die Fragen nach einem politischen Dialog und einer umfassenden Amnestie wieder ins Zentrum des politischen Diskurses. Beides hatte eine Kommission¹²⁸ unter Ledum Mitee, Präsident der Ogoni-Organisation (Mosop), bereits mehrere Monate zuvor empfohlen, um wenigstens die Spirale der Gewalt zu unterbrechen und dann Konsolidierungsgespräche zu beginnen.“¹²⁹

The policy which lacked much detail only stated that Militants in the Niger Delta who lay down their arms within 60 days (i.e. 6th August 2009-4th October 2009) will not be prosecuted for crimes committed in attacking oil companies and installations which led to the crippling of Nigeria's oil industry. Also carving a new direction towards the realization of peace in the region, the President noted that the policy was not only about militants laying down their arms, but also concerned about reintegrating those of them who are ready to lay down arms into the larger society.

„Die Demobilisierung von einigen Tausend Milizionären began dennoch überraschend zügig. Die Regierung belohnte die Entwaffnungskampagne anfangs noch mit direkten finanziellen Zuwendungen und versprach, binnen weinger Wochen Schulungscamps einzurichten, wo die einstigen Outlaws in mehrmonatigen Kurzen resozialisiert und dann wieder in die Gesellschaft integriert werden sollten.“¹³⁰

In line with Heinrich Bergstresser's observation on the implementation plan of the amnesty policy in the Niger Delta, it is also worthy to note that militants are by this

¹²⁷ Bergstresser, H. 2010, p.46

¹²⁸ Technical Committee on the Niger Delta Amnesty Policy: Constituted by President Umaru Musa Yardua, Abuja, 24th June, 2009.

¹²⁹ Bergstresser, H. 2010, p.46

¹³⁰ Ibid.

policy expected to go to the nearest screening centre, turn in their arms, register, take an oath not to engage in any further armed violence and receive a residential amnesty and unconditional pardon. Finally, those who receive amnesty are registered for a rehabilitation and reintegration program.

But despite the amnesty program, the new trend in the Niger delta is also feeding into global securitization of the region and the surrounding Gulf of Guinea, whereby the international community is concerned about its energy security interest and a possible effect of the volatile region on the maritime commercial and strategic interests in West Africa. What the foregoing shows is that peace in the region is of very high importance since the situation in the region has gone beyond an ethnic minority conflict, with far reaching national and global ramifications.

As certain levels, the conflict appears to be one between the ethnic communities of the region against the oil companies and the government, but such a conclusion would be misleading and false as the reality the Nigerian Government has finally agreed is more complex. It involves violent contestation around a historically constructed sense of grievances, injustice, inequality and wanton exploitation and impoverishment by the Government and international oil companies to which a faction of the Niger Delta elite also belong.

As I have earlier observed, the empirical evidence coming out of the Niger Delta shows that the conflicts have complex causes: roots and branches that mutate over time in response to various factors and forces: local, national and global, and defy a very simplistic explanation or 'quick fixes' by the Nigerian Government. Also reducing these complex factors by the government and major stakeholders to simple assumptions and representations that do not capture the specificities of the common citizens in the region may lead to misleading results. It is for this reason that great care must be taken by the government in adopting the right perspectives in proffering solutions. So the recognition of the historical dynamics of the Niger Delta conflict will help to initiate a new road-map of which among others will include lasting peace agreements, multiparty democracy, human rights, the enhancement of development; failure to recognise all these may end up further down the road in results that are not liberal, developmental or peaceful.

Chapter IV: Development and Sustainable Development in the Region

4.1. What is Development and sustainable Development?

When the issue of development comes into question, the following conditions among other comes to mind: attainment of long and healthy life, access to quality education, access to decent housing, and access to resources needed for decent standard of living¹³¹ for the people. And the fulfilment of these aspirations as conditions for development can also be better working conditions, security against crime and physical violence, satisfactory use of leisure hours and more secure livelihood.¹³² Thus, the meaning of development is not settled, and this perhaps, is one of the problems militating against the design of an appropriate development strategy for the region.

But technically, 'development' can be said to mean an improvement in living condition for the average person. This means that development entails increase in income; and more than that, it can also mean the access to housing, education, healthcare, nutrition and even greater life expectancy.¹³³

But then it is instructive to note that while economic growth is a necessary condition for improvement in living conditions, it is not a sufficient condition for development; since "human progress may be lacking in a society despite rapid growth or high per capita income levels unless some additional steps are taken."¹³⁴

So the further steps to be taken to ensure development in the Niger Delta may also entails the formulation and implementation of policies to build capital formation within the rural communities- that is capital accumulation or investment. This calls for the realization and actualization of the material or physical energy and power that is inherent in the environment and people to promote development. This focuses on how development can lift the citizens and promote their dignity and identity in their environment.

Sustainable development has to do with the people, that is to say it is people-centred; and so the welfare and the well-being of human beings in this society are

¹³¹ United Nations Development Program Report: Human Development Report, New York, 1990, p.1.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid. P.11

the chief concerns of development. It has to be a process by which the citizens actualizes all their resources, talents and potentialities that are innate and latent in them and their environment. It is a process by which people in this region will develop their physical, intellectual, economic, political, moral and religious qualities. Development has to procure their welfare and well-being, their prosperity and happiness. Development must be all round and complete, meaningful and authentic for the people.¹³⁵

An authentic development for the Niger Delta cannot be reduced to merely capital accumulation, economic growth and economic restructuring; but the complete restructuring and transformation of the people from dependent to self-reliant people, a sort of an 'down-up' concept of development.

Another illusion and confusion about the development in the region include sometimes the belief by some policy makers and citizens that adequate development can as well be achieved without cost and pain. In this respect, the people and the government inclusive, feel helpless and sit back with the conception that they can achieve little without foreign aid to end the crisis and develop the region. Whereas when development is understood as a process of bringing about fundamental and sustainable changes in the society, then it has to transcend as well as encompass physical growth. It embraces all aspects of the quality of life of social justice, equality of opportunity for all citizens, equitable distribution of income and democratization of the development process.¹³⁶ It has to be a collective responsibility in which all have to share in the labour as well as the fruits. So everything about the development people of the region have to lie in their freedom and human dignity; and therefore, the development and progress of the people cannot lie in the mindless violence, youth restiveness and militancy, but on an intelligent use of local resources and manpower.

Genuine, self –reliant processes of development have to be experienced in their attitudes to work, their readiness to liberate themselves from illiteracy and poverty, their saving and investment habits, their concepts and skills and social systems.¹³⁷ Authentic and sustainable self-reliant development of the region results in this process of transformation of the people. The ultimate purpose of development is the

¹³⁵ Ogunmodede, F.I. The Church and Human Development in the Thoughts of Obafemi Awolowo in: Martin M.A. et al (ed.) *Bodija Journal*, Ibadan, 1992, p.83.

¹³⁶ Asante, S.K.B. *African Alternative Development*, Ibadan, 1991, p.6.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

development of man, particularly the unfolding of his creative potential through improvement not only in his material conditions of living which enables him to fulfil his physiological needs but also through the satisfaction of his psychic needs. Development is indeed liberation from poverty and from stunted view of self, instilling self-esteem and a sense of efficiency or ability to make choices about the future. In other words development is people, and the development for society means development of the collective personality of society.

Development and peace in the Niger Delta comes only from the people's creative energy, and must be pursued in line with the principles of self-reliance. Self – reliance is the responsibility for producing the resources to carry the society through.¹³⁸ Development in the Niger Delta region should mean the process by which the people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choice, environment and values.¹³⁹

This process of development requires the total involvement of the people of the region since development is centred on them. So the substance and focus of development must be located on the ordinary man and women in the rural communities and villages of the region. Put in other words, development is not simply infrastructural, technological, etc. but about human welfare- that is, about significant improvement in the lives of the ordinary people. It is about creating circumstances and conditions that sustain the sense of fulfilment and satisfaction in people rather than development of infrastructural artefacts and technological ventures that sometimes have little or no bearing on the people's welfare and well-being.

The society needs to be seen from the point of view of being constantly in development and transformation. It cannot remain redundant, since change is the only thing that is constant in nature. Flowing from this concept, development in the region, need to be observed from the angle of qualitative and quantitative collective participation of all from a state of dependency, poverty, disease, autocracy and bad governance, backwardness, social decadence and political subjugation, to one characterised by freedom, rule of law, abundance of opportunity, good health,

¹³⁸ Ake, C. Democracy and Development, Ibadan, 2001, p.140.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

democracy, civility, egalitarianism, social welfare and security, as well as political independence.

„Das Leitwort Nachhaltigkeit wird dann ein ethisches Kriterium, wenn es um die Nachhaltigkeit von etwas geht, das wir als dringliches und hochrangiges Gut für Mensch und Natur (oder für den Menschen in der Natur) ansehen.... Nachhaltigkeit erhält also ihre kriteriologische Schärfe von den notwendigen Gütern für das Überleben der Menschheit, da es um Zukunftssicherung geht.¹⁴⁰

So any study on sustainable development in the Niger Delta, which will relate to the benefit the people and their environment will always focus on these three basic principles: their economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. These three principles may represent in this variant: Economically sustainable-growth, equity and efficiency; socially sustainable –empowerment, participation, social mobility, social cohesion, and institutional development; environmentally sustainable- environmental integrity, carrying capacity and general environmental awareness.

An economically sustainable Niger Delta society is one that can be able to produce goods and services for its people on a continuing basis and maintain manageable economy without jeopardizing different sectors and economic activities of oil companies in the region. Sustainable economy maintains its natural resource base and it can continue to develop by adapting to changing circumstances and through improvements in knowledge organisation, technical efficiency and wisdom. But an environmentally sustainable system in the Niger Delta can maintain a stable resource systems or environmental sink functions and depleting non-renewable resources within the oil-producing communities only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes. This includes maintenance of biodiversity and basic African environmental values; atmospheric stability and not treating the gifts of nature not only as economic resources but also as beings with inherent values. A socially sustainable community treats its environment both as a material resource and also with constraint. This in the Niger Delta will assist to achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity and political accountability, transparency and participation. This should be with dynamic understanding of human rights that is developing rapidly. For instance,

¹⁴⁰ Mieth, D. Nachhaltigkeit als ökologisches und sozialetisches Kriterium, in: Mieth, D. (Hg.) Solidarität und Gerechtigkeit- Die Gesellschaft von Morgen gestalten, Stuttgart, 2009, pp.199-200.

the rights to life and liberty of when recognised in the Niger Delta can enhance a healthy environment and development.

Bearing in mind the social and human-centred development as noted before, the idea of the concept of sustainable development in the Niger Delta will change the hitherto limited view of it as mere conservation and development. It will now encompass some of the positive dimensions of the new social paradigm expressed in authentic integral development desirable in the society.¹⁴¹

The above conceptualisation of development being propounded in this work for the Niger Delta will be: "The eradication of poverty among its inhabitants and the emergence of a relatively egalitarian and participatory society with an advanced material standard of living."¹⁴² From the above statement, development of society like the Niger Delta is premised on certain agencies and the coincidence of the interest of these agencies with the implications of development. The primary agencies of development are the state, those entrusted with power and its representatives in government. It must also here be stressed that the question of the desirability of development is never accidental, nor is it ever answered objectively. Somebody as a matter of fact, has to determine that development is desirable through meaningful and people oriented policies; that a particular kind of development should be pursued and in a particular manner.

Another condition for engendering development is what may be called 'barter imperative', and that is the condition of a sort of double coincidence of want between the ruling hegemony and the imperatives of development. In other words, the possibility of development, or the character of development is a function of the how the ruling coalition in a state perceives it in relations to its own objective class interest, both on the short and long term runs.

The final condition flows from the awareness that the state is a specific modality of domination, hence why it is necessarily a living contradiction, a contradiction of powers and of social forces. Consequently, the nature and the ability of the ruling class to maintain its hegemony and counter-force deployed by the dominated and

¹⁴¹ Engel, J., & Engel, J.G. (eds.) *The Ethics of Sustainable Development*, in: *The ethics of environment and development*, Tucson, 1999, p.10.

¹⁴² Langdon, S. *The Political Economy of Dependence: Notes towards analysis of multinational corporations in Kenya*, in: *Journal of East African Research and Development*, 1974, 2, p.121.

oppressed citizens in reaction to their domination goes a long way to condition the possibility or otherwise of development.¹⁴³

Quite often, as the situation in the Niger Delta (and in other parts of Nigeria) aptly shows, governance is to large extent dominated by politics, which in turn finds expression in the domination, exploitation and demobilization of the popular masses. In this way, scarce resources that would otherwise have been used for developmental purposes goes into building arsenal of terror and militarised state. The major point we want to underscore here is that for sustainable development to take proper place, there need to be “a political system that secures effective citizen participation; an economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant basis; a social system that provides for solution for the tensions arising from disharmonious development; a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the environmental base for development; a technological system that can search continuously for new solutions; an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance; and an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.”¹⁴⁴ From the above, one can establish that the primacy, qualitative and meaningful existence of the people in the oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta as central for their sustainable development. To this end, they must have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of development, just as they must be empowered intellectually and technically to take decisions and be consciously engaged in their developmental process. The political, social, economic and technological systems must be harnessed in an organic synergy that contributes to bringing out the best in the individual citizen and their environment. It is relevant at this point to explore to what extent the administrations and politics, the programmes and policies of the Nigeria state are fashioned towards the realization of sustainable development in the nation.

4.2. Administrative Management vis-à-vis Sustainable Development

The term administrative management as it concerns this work is simply “finding out how existing knowledge (and human and natural) can best be applied to produce

¹⁴³ Ake, C. Africa and the Political Economy Approach, in: The Political Economy of Crisis and Underdevelopment in Africa, Selected Works of Claude Ake, Ihonvbere J., (Ed.), Lagos, 1989, p.43.

¹⁴⁴ WCED (World Commission on Environmental Development): Our Common Future, Oxford, 1987.

result.”¹⁴⁵ Knowledge in this region can be systematically and purposefully applied to determine and find out what new knowledge is needed, whether it is feasible, and what has to be done to make this knowledge effective. It is being applied, in other words, to systematic innovation¹⁴⁶ especially for the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

In practical terms, administrative management could be understood, in general, as the act of directing and controlling the affairs of government for the people within this society; the act of managing the people and their environment; controlling and ensuring that they operate efficiently and effectively; directing a proper design of sustainable development, administration, control and supervision; effective utilization and co-ordination of resources such as natural resources, capital, materials and labour, to achieve defined objectives with maximum efficiency; evaluating the use of people, money, materials and facilities to accomplish sustainable mission and task; process of achieving organizational goals by planning, organizing, leading and controlling the Niger Delta’s resources.

Additionally that administrative management has also to do with the transformation of knowledge from the rational to the practical, since “a real knowledge of things may be a good thing in itself, but the knowledge of men and their opinions is better, for in human society man is the chief tool of man, and the wisest man is he who knows best the use of this tool”¹⁴⁷

This is relevant because it recognises not only the practical aspect of administrative management but also its social aspect. It is these aspects which the Niger Delta requires for development. As such, administrative management can be seen as an art of working, particularly through people, for the achievement of goals (positive) in the society. Therefore it is the human person who initiates the process and receives the end results of whatever goals of development that is administered.

„Die Verantwortung für das Gemeinwohl kommt nicht nur den einzelnen Personen, sondern auch dem Staat zu, weil das Gemeinwohl die Daseinsberechtigung, der politischen Autorität ist. Der Staat nämlich muss den Zusammenhalt, die Einheitlichkeit und die Organisation der zivilen Gesellschaft, deren Ausdruck er ist, dergestalt garantieren, dass das Gemeinwohl durch die Mitwirkung aller Bürger

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. P.42.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. P.42.

¹⁴⁷ Rousseau, J.J. Guidelines for Knowledge Management from the Phenomenological Literature, in: Nnoli-Edozien, N. African Traditional values applied to modern issues of sustainability and the corporate governance function, Enugu, 2007, p.94 (Dr. Ndidi Nnoli-Edozien is a scholar and researcher on issues related to African self-determination and culturally rooted development).

erreicht werden kann. Der einzelne Mensch, die Familien, die mittleren Körperschaften sind nicht in der Lage, aus eigener Kraft zu ihrer vollen Entfaltung zu gelangen; daraus folgt die Notwendigkeit politischer Institutionen, deren Zweck darin besteht, die –materiellen, Kulturellen, moralischen- Güter den Personen zugänglich zu machen, die erforderlich sind, um ein wahrhaft menschliches Leben zu führen. Das Ziel des gesellschaftlichen Lebens ist das historisch realisierbare Gemeinwohl.“¹⁴⁸

As the case may be, one has to affirm the fact that any development that will be sustainable in the Niger Delta will involve new administrative policies that will include: increase in real income especially for the ordinary citizen. This implies poverty alleviation on the long run; improvement in health and nutritional status especially children and women who are vulnerable to most prevented diseases in the rural areas of the Niger Delta; education and training; a fairer equitable distribution of income: the basic salary of the least paid worker should be adequate to maintain his nuclear family; increase in basic freedoms and guaranteed security of all citizens and workers in the region; and the respect and a responsible relation with the environment.

Some of the factors in respect of development above were also captured and reflected in some of the formal administrative policies of the Nigerian government in the past. The democratic government of Obasanjo's regime rightly in the year 2000 observed especially on the social and economic policies of his administration that the provision of basic social services are the safest and quickest means to poverty alleviation and human development. Accordingly the administration embarked upon laudable programmes on Universal Basic Education, Primary Health Care, National Programme on Immunization and poverty Alleviation Programme to make concrete and measurable impact on poverty reduction and progress in human development. Its economic policy was then designed around the principal objectives of meeting the global commitment of halving poverty in the Niger Delta (and other Nigerian regions) by the year 2015.¹⁴⁹ During this time in Nigeria, the immediate form of the administrative policy, objectives and targets were set with the belief that the basic needs of all can and must be met as much as possible as a matter of people's fundamental rights. It also affirmed that every citizen has a right to basic social services, of basic education, access to functional health care, immunization for

¹⁴⁸ Kompendium der Soziallehre der Kirche: Die Aufgaben der politischen Gemeinschaft, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006, no. 168.

¹⁴⁹ Ad'obe, O. A New Dawn: A collection of speeches of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Vol. II, Ibadan, 2001, pp.187-188.

children, employment for youth, living wages for workers, clean water for all, security of lives and property and finally rights to democratic dividends. In essence, it proclaimed that a development which is sustainable cannot be anything but the fundamental responsibility of a good democratic administration and the basic rights of citizens.

Since Nigeria's independence in October 1960, various administrations (military and democratic) have embarked upon the road to development as mapped out by the West without any serious ideological reflection on the appropriateness or otherwise of the type of development it wanted to embrace. It ultimately embraced capitalist developmental paradigm as the necessary instrument to realize its developmental objectives. In its current neo-liberal form this type of development policies are broken down into economic, social and political aspects. The economic development paradigm, for instance, "consists of economic growth measured principally in terms of gross domestic product, industrialization, capital formation, infrastructure, strong balance of payments as well as economic efficiency of Nigeria. Economic development is to be achieved among others through administrative and economic policies that support the free market, reduces state participation in the economy (what is known as privatization in the Nigeria parlance) and expands the private economy, enhances liberalization of foreign trade and enunciates a domestic price structure, especially capital foreign exchange that support all these."¹⁵⁰

The implicit assumption in this notion of economic development in Nigeria is that there is only one possible way to development namely the universal Western type of economic development by which the Nigerian nation must go through to survive. It must follow a process starting from a primitive, traditional, agricultural, low productivity economy to developed capitalist economy of the Western type. Western ideas, patterns and norms must be strictly followed in order to arrive at the desired economic development. Furthermore, the implication includes the abandonment of the basic Nigeria traditional values, cultures and cosmology and structures of extended family, empathy and primordial solidarity which must be given away at the expense of economic growth, efficiency and mobility of labour and capital in Nigerian society.

Along the way to economic development, Nigerian administrative policies exhibits the resemblance of development in its socio-economic institutions and programmes

¹⁵⁰ Ibeanu, O. Alternative poverty eradication strategy: Introductory issues in centre for democracy and development, Lagos, 2004, p.2.

but deep down there in the daily lives and reality within the rural communities, poverty, youth restiveness and militancy, environmental degradation with communal-environmental conflicts are daily occurrences. So in order to alleviate poverty various administrative policies and strategies were put into place (although some of them were not properly planned and so they could not raise the living standards of the citizens). Some of the strategies and administrative policies includes: Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) to adjust wages to inflationary trends; The Adebo Wages Panel; Price and Rent Decree; National Minimum Wage Act; The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) aimed to aid food production and revamp rural infrastructure like roads, water, electricity and sanitation; Directorate for Social Mobilization, Self-Reliance; The Economic Recovery and Social Justice (MAMSER); Better Life Programme for Rural Women; Family Support Programme (FSP); National Directorate for Employment; Vision 2020; and most recently the Nigeria's Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan (PRSP) which aims at achieving economic growth with inclusive development in the social sector and human resources development and protection from various pressing manifestations of poverty in the Nigerian society. Other administrative strategies includes rural agricultural development for the Niger Delta, infrastructural rehabilitation, privatization and liberalization of the oil sector, environmental sustainability, free and fair policies on human rights and political elections; good economic governance, the eradication of HIV/AIDS for people in the Niger Delta and for all Nigerians.

Specifically, one of the administrative policies that may have a bearing in this work is the National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS). The strategy was a response to the development challenges on Nigeria. It was planned for and seriously pursued with the assistance of the World Bank having in view the laying of 'a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation, value re-orientation and good governance,¹⁵¹ and believing that Nigeria has all it takes (human and material resources) to become the strongest economy in Africa – and one of the leading economies in the world in the longer term.

NEEDS has its goal the mobilisation of the resources in the Niger Delta and the entire Nigeria to make a fundamental break with the failures of the past administrations and bequeath a united and prosperous nation to the generations to

¹⁵¹ National Planning Commission: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, Abuja, 2004, p.3.

come. And in its evaluation of the past decades development programmes and activities, NEEDS identified some problems and proffered solutions in its objectives and goals. Some of the problems are poverty and inequality, weak and inappropriate public sector, poor economic management and hostile environment for private sector growth.¹⁵²

In order to address the identified problems, it sets as its objectives as: The empowerment of people based on basic needs of life on the principle of equality and equity. Some of these needs are adequate/portable water, sanitation, nutrition, clothing, shelter, basic education and health care as well as physical security and means of making a living; job creation and training people in skills relevant to their immediate work environment and by promoting integrated rural development in collaboration with the states; creating affordable houses that will be affordable for all; de-urbanisation, and discouraging rural-urban influx by rural empowerment and the provision of infrastructure for urban resettlement scheme through the introduction of mega-city, for instance, Lagos; Improving health care services that are aimed to target diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and reproduction health related illness. A strong emphasis were placed on health education for rural communities to make them more aware of their rights and obligations regarding health services; promoting disease prevention and intensify campaign to eradicate harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage; the power sector development objectives of this administrative policy includes to generate more energy for rural based cottage industries; to explore alternative energy sources such as coal, solar power, wind power and hydro power in the oil producing communities, and also deregulate the power sector to allow increased private sector participation; enforcing anti-corruption laws which are aimed at tackling corruption and promoting transparency, accountability and good governance. Its actions plans includes Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corruption Practices and Other Crimes Commission (ICPC); environmental management laws and objectives, aimed to foster oil companies participation in environmental protection and to complying with international standards in controlling and monitoring oil spills in the Niger Delta, reverse the loss of biodiversity, standardize the use of modern facilities in

¹⁵² Ibid.

environmental services and control, and to phase out hazardous processes in oil exploration and exploitation.

Despite all these strategies in place, it is also unfortunate to observe that many rural communities in the Niger Delta region are still facing the problems of poverty and illiteracy although it is one of the highest producers of oil within the cartel of Organization of Oil Producing Countries.¹⁵³ However, it may be too early to critically evaluate the impact of NEEDS on the Niger Delta development; since that will derail the main idea of this research.

4.3. Good Governance and Sustainable Development

From the observations far in this work, it seems that an enduring solution to the environmental and social crisis in the Niger Delta region may last a while without initially confronting the issue of capacity building of self-directed sustainable development. To do this, there is somewhat the need to initiate a process of socio-ethical reconstruction designed to achieve the certain core and goals of which democracy and good governance is a key to them all.

The kind of governance meant in this study has to do with the exercise of power or authority –political, economic, administrative or otherwise – to manage the resources and affairs of the area. It also has to include the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. In relation to the Niger Delta, governance is what can be referred to as the organisation of its political life. It is that part of body politic that is especially concerned with the maintenance of law, promotion of the common welfare and public order, and the administration of public affairs. The government is a part, which specializes in the interest of the whole. It is not a man or body of men; it is a set of institution combined into a topmost machine; the government is an agency entitled to use power and coercion and made of experts or specialists in public order and welfare, an instrument in the service of man. Therefore, putting man at the service of that instrument (governance) is political perversion. The human person as an individual is for the government and the government is for the human person:

¹⁵³ United Nations Development programme: Human Development Report, Nigeria, 2004, pp.285-391.

„Institutionen (government) die Funktion, die Vermittlung zwischen gesellschaftlichen Bedürfnissen unterschiedlicher Art und deren Befriedigung zu leisten. Sie geben dem gesellschaftlichen Leben Ordnung. Sie sind auf Dauer angelegt. Ihrer besonderen Ausgestaltung nach sind sie wandlungsfähig. Als Hervorbringungen menschlicher Intelligenz sind sie Ersatz für die Verhaltensregulationen des Instinktes.“¹⁵⁴

Worthy to note here is the fact that government ought to be subordinate to the will of the citizens of the region and endowed with topmost authority not by its own right and for its own sake but only by virtue and to the extent of requirement of the common good.

In the real sense of it, it is a government that is completely responsible to all citizens. In fact, the common democratic principle which in this work is recommended for the Niger Delta lies on the submission of a greater number of things/issues to collective debate, scrutinising government activities and debating current events in the region.

“Der Idealtypus demokratischer Politik entspricht der Grundüberzeugung moderner Gesellschaft, alle Individuen chancengleich als aktive Subjekte in den Konstitutionsakt der objektiven gesellschaftlichen Ordnung und des objektiven gesellschaftlichen Willens einzubeziehen. Auch hier ist das harmonistische Grundmodell, das das politisch Allgemeine direkt aus den besonderen Willen aller Individuen entspringen lässt, durch Konfliktmodelle zu ergänzen. Das Konzept der direkten Demokratie übersieht die materiellen Ungleichheiten der gesellschaftlichen Subgruppen und damit die Machtambitionen von Parteien, die im Namen des sozialen Ganzen handeln, die sozial Schwächeren aber überspielen, politisch Andersdenkende ignorieren oder unterdrücken.“¹⁵⁵

Nonetheless, there are some basic ideals of a harmonious society which can also help to bring help to the people of the region, these are: freedom, equality and accountability, right to vote and be voted for. In consonant with these ideals, Irele asserts that, in any society, the people are expected to enjoy freedom of speech; they should be able to express their views on government policies and whatever concerns the society. Equally, there should be freedom of press and religion. The notion of equality, however, contains five separate ideas that are used in varying degrees, these are: political equality, equality before the law, equality of opportunity, economic equality and social equality. The most important among these five ideas is equality in the voting system, which requires that each vote is given the same

¹⁵⁴ Drösser, G., Institutionen und Soziales Handeln, in: Heimbach-Steins, M. (Hrg.): Christliche Sozialethik, ein Lehrbuch, Bd.1, Regensburg, 2004, p.230.

¹⁵⁵ Drösser, G., Demokratische Verantwortung und Politische Partizipation, in: Heimbach-Steins, M. (Hrg.): Christliche Sozialethik, ein Lehrbuch, Bd.2, Regensburg, 2004, p.29.

weight, without discrimination against any one on the ground of gender, race, religion, economic status and so on.

On the issue of accountability, it is a principle that the government have to be accountable to the people of the region on issues of hazards on oil exploitation in the region. Politicians, oil companies and representatives can be called upon to account for their policies and programmes, and this is carried out through periodic elections, which are open and competitive. The right to vote and be vote for is in connection with the principle of equality as mentioned above. The emphasis here is that the vote of all people must have equal weight.

Following the ideals and principles being analysed so far, there is an essential link between good and accountable government and the ability to achieve sustained economic growth and social development which are geared towards the welfare of the citizens.

Good governance can be described as how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in order to guarantee the realization of human rights."¹⁵⁶ It also involves the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). The concept of "good governance" often emerges as a model to compare ineffective political bodies with viable political bodies

There are certain ethical principles of which good governance in enhancing environmental ethics in the Niger Delta can be presupposed: Good governance is to be based on the establishment of a strong representative government, which should be accountable to the Nigerian citizens; it may require a strong and pluralistic civil society; it requires good and strong institutions – sets of rules governing the actions of citizens and government agencies and the negotiation of differences between them; it can also require the primacy of the rule of law, maintained through an impartial and effective environmental laws. It requires a high degree of transparency and accountability in public and corporate processes. A participatory approach to service delivery is highly recommended for public services delivery to be effective in the Niger Delta; it requires policies to promote broad-based economic growth, a dynamic private sector and social policies that will lead to poverty reduction;

¹⁵⁶ Seite: „Good Governance” in: Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Bearbeitungstand: 1. July, 2010, 17.22 UTC, URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_governance, (Abgerufen: 1.July 2010, 17.28 UTC).

economic growth is best achieved in an efficient, open market-based economy.¹⁵⁷ It requires investment in people, through policies and agencies that improve access to quality education, strong health-care delivery and other services that will assist to underpin Nigeria's human resource base.

And finally, for good governance to be more effective in the Niger Delta, there is also required an effective institutions and good corporate governance to support the development of a competitive private sector. In particular, for market to function, social norms are needed that respect contract and property rights especially in the oil-producing communities.

It should be clear from the analysis so far, that these principles and ideals are essential in order to check the high level of violence in the region and to have a society- where the national conscience is being stirred and aroused; every citizen ceases to tolerate falsehood and violence, dishonesty and pretentiousness in public life.

The emphasis is that: if Nigeria and other stakeholders in the region are unable to solve the crisis in the Niger Delta, then the nation may be unable to develop an appropriate thought and action that will reposition her to greatness and development.

4.4. Dialogue- A Road-Map to sustainable Development

Dialogue can be a process by which all citizens and stakeholders (the government and oil companies) of the Niger Delta region come to discuss and accept certain basic principles as against other competing ones as the only ones that will check environmental problems; govern equitably, that is, justly the fundamental structures that will bring sustainable development. This means arriving at a realistic consensus

¹⁵⁷ Der entscheidende Erklärungsfaktor für die Instabilität der nigerianischen Demokratie liegt im sozio-ökonomischen Charakter der herrschenden Klasse Nigerias. Im Zentrum steht die These von der „Privatisierung des Staates“ durch die nigerianische Bourgeoisie. Der Staat ist durch seinen aus der Erdölproduktion stammenden Reichtum die bei weitem wichtigste Akkumulationsinstanz. Er hat das große Geld, wendet er aber wegen seines Eingeschworeneins auf das kapitalistische Wirtschaftssystem nicht selbst in der Produktion an, sondern vergibt es für ungezählte „Projekte“ in kaum koordinierten contracts an Privatunternehmer. Cf. Hauck, G., Die Konsolidierungschancen der afrikanischen Demokratie am Beispiel Nigerias. Zum Verhältnis von Staat, Ethnoparteien und Konfliktfähigen Gruppen, in: Tetzlaff, R., Engel, U., Mehler, A. (Hrg.) Afrika Zwischen Dekolonisation, Staatsversagen und Demokratisierung, Hamburg, 1995, p.193.

to the required principles. The principle must also be a result of contract, implying consent of all citizens and groups of the society. In the method of agreement or dialogue, the contract is also one based on an initial situation of sociality, commonness and basic unity that already exists among the members of the society.

This work envisages that dialogue is the only process by which we can arrive at basic principles that can work. Neither pure natural law theory nor unordered intuitionism can guide in this task, if integral development and peace are to be built in the pluralistic nature of the region and if political unity is to be achieved among the different members of the society- individuals and groups. If one is to avoid externally imposed principles from the elites and 'interest groups' which destroy liberty and thereby create a false society, and if anarchy is not to result from the sole guidance of unarticulated intuition, then dialogue on principles becomes imperative.

The famous saying has it that 'Africans continue to discuss until they agree'. Discourse, especially the use of language, is a means of agreement. It means dialogue as an exchange between two or more persons. In the case under consideration, it concerns controversial issues and aims at an acceptable solution or principle of solution.

The reaching of a compromise is pursued by questions and replies- a kind of communal internal debate. The texture of the problem defines itself within this dialogue process in which all have a chance to be heard and to hear all others and thus participate in the decision processes. The decision of the case follows the outcome of this dialogue. Where there is no general or overwhelming consensus, for instance, as to whose land will diminish or the issue of resource control in the Niger Delta or in the case of legal justice who is at fault, the discussion is postponed for future continuation to give room for more fact-finding and research for clearer evidence. The concept of majority decision and its institutionalization in political parties is foreign to the Niger Delta people and to many ethnic groups in Nigeria. No decision is ever imposed on the people, even in hard cases. Thus dialogue, negotiation and mutual compromise are elements that are indispensable in the resolution of conflicts among the Niger Delta societal context.

The kind of dialogue being advocated in this work is such that will kick-start development in the region as contrary to the violence that is now obtainable. It is

opposed to violence as a means for resolution of conflicts in general and for the affirmation of individual consent and liberty as a principle of justice in particular. While dialogue is the search for agreement by means of language, violence is the direct negation of this search. Violence and discourse (dialogue) are two opposite poles of human existence.

The sole goal of discussion of the Niger Delta crisis is to arrive at the truth: that no force except that of the better argument is exercised, and that as a result, all motives except that of the co-operative search for the truth are excluded; since whoever argues within a communicating community stands at the level of communicative action and gives his or her arguments a universal validity.¹⁵⁸

The model of dialogue advocated in this work have to be founded not on the individualistic starting point of various ethnic militias and groups within the region, but on the society's nature, its understanding of this nature, and the values and traditions that underlie and expresses its existence. This is what can be called communal reason. The gravitating force of dialogue in the Niger Delta has to be founded on this communal reason. Communal reason can be seen as an intuitive and reasoned existential togetherness among members of the region. It can be described as "the way a people are and see it."¹⁵⁹ It has two components: communal characteristics, and reason or reflection which makes a judgement from these communal qualities valid for the community and the individuals in it. The people, given their special characteristics e.g. worldview, environment, culture, language, history, values and tradition as well as common aspirations, would intuitively and spontaneously come to judge a certain situation just or unjust, permissible or not, worthwhile or not. This intuitive characteristic also makes a people evaluate different situations or elements either as of great or less moral significance.

In summary, communal reason of the Niger Delta society are what persons, characterized by their cultural and historical specificities, would come to see as the ethically right thing to do, on due reflection. Societal communal reason is not a common reason, for the latter does not exist. The quality of reflection for the people of the Niger Delta is unique to them. But there is an epistemological significance that different individuals have similar experiences: historical, cultural, traditional would

¹⁵⁸ Bujo, B. *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, Nairobi, 1997, p.38.

¹⁵⁹ Iroegbu, p. *Communalism: Towards justice in Africa*, Owerri, 1996, p.70.

see certain things and make certain judgements similarly compared to another people with different experiences. Though difference will always exist between individual Niger Delta groups from different ethnic groups in the use of their individual reasons, they will often come to agree in their view of many issues including what conception of justice should be accepted on due reflection for every person in the region.

Finally, in this approach to dialogue as a means toward realizing a sustainable development in the Niger Delta, one has to look into three major ingredients in methodology: Firstly, is the principle of reasonableness in the dialogue. This entails the willingness of all the entire Niger Delta society- individuals and groups- to agree on those principles which will permit and promote the co-existence of all the citizens as one people. It allows for the full rule of the principles to be agreed upon in the daily workings of the nation. A dialogic principle is said to be reasonable if it does not hinder the dynamic existence of others, i.e. their capacity to live their lives as full citizens of the political society; and also when it promotes this dynamic existence.

A reasonable dialogue can also be seen as the openness to accept fair terms of co-operation. A reasonable dialogue demands reciprocity and mutuality. The Niger Delta society when it comes to dialogue towards forging a formidable development is said to be reasonable when all its citizens are ready to share both the benefits and burdens of co-operation. The acceptance to come together in the first place is a sign of this willingness. The citizens are reasonable when the parties (the government and oil companies) recognize one another as partners. In the first instance, the case of the problems has not yet been decided, not even examined; yet the willingness to assemble is a positive step towards success in the search for the solution. None of the groups has decided the case in this own ethnic group. So to be ready to engage in a reasonable dialogue is to accept that we discuss on mutual terms; that we are open to arrive at a solution which will be for the good of all as full members of the region. Being unreasonable means being closed to the dialogue itself. The consequence is obvious towards a nation building- the destruction of a society. Yet reasonableness in a dialogue must not be confused with total unanimity or an *a priori* exclusion of conflicts. It is a readiness to resolve, it is not in se, the resolution of conflict. So the necessity of reasonableness to dialogue entails therefore that any

principle to be adopted must be one that has openness to conflict resolution, an openness which permits and promotes the co-existence of all citizens.

The second principle required for any dialogue to be meaningful for sustainable development in the Niger Delta is that it must be rational. This demands that the groups who engage in a dialogue must give acceptable reasons or justifications to back their point of view or their argument. All reasons are then surveyed and weighed together. But any reason that does not sustain reasonableness, the mutual good of all the members of the society must be thrown out. This means that the group or individual's rational advantage must be considered; but its adoption must also be consistent with reasonableness. If the rationality were to displace the reasonability in any dialogue, the continuity of the dialogical community will be broken, so the rationality aspect of a dialogue therefore excludes the monologue of non-justification.

So a discourse is a non-repressive deliberation towards a substantive satisfaction of all the compatible interests and needs of the members of the Niger Delta society in a dialogue. In a dialogue therefore, all the parties must decide together. Their decision depends on the basic fact of communal reason which is an articulation of what they are and how they understand themselves to be so, what relationships and rationalities they have at their disposal and what they want to make out of their given environment.

Thirdly, any meaningful dialogue for sustainable development in the Niger Delta society must also give room for 'give and take'; which means a strong will for all the members to accommodate each other (the government and multinational oil companies), which is indispensable for the actual existence and practical operations of the society. Only this give and take makes respectful co-existence possible. It is the condition for the realization of the good of all. While reasonableness is the initial willingness to dialogue, negotiation or 'give and take' is the continued willingness to realize a fruit of dialogue which is agreement in the principles for solution of conflicts. Negotiation is the accommodation of the common decision even when we something to lose in the distribution of the resources, at least in the short run.

For the people of the region to be accommodative in a dialogue does not mean suffering losses for nothing. It means accepting certain inconveniences, basically the

differences that exist among the parties in dialogue, for the sake of the good of all. Basically, it is a free compromise for the common good. But negotiation also has two other ramifications: (a) it implies the continuity of dialogue until a resolution is reached. As we noted before, Africans continue to discuss until they agree. (b) Negotiation implies also sincerity of dialogue among the partners. The true test of sincerity in a dialogue is the continuing willingness and ability of the people to be consistent in applying the principles they have agreed upon into a strict rule. Proper negotiation in a dialogue is sincere when it can consistently end up in the principle of legality. In the Niger Delta case, the legislation regarding proper use of the environment that is the fruit of the dialogue that will aid sustainable development must check the misuses and abuses of the principles that are to be agreed upon. It makes for mutual trust and stability in the foundational structure. This legislative imperative of negotiation is given expression in the rule of law.

4.4.1. Rule of Law

The principles of rule of law are an indispensable ingredient in resolving the Niger Delta crisis. The primary function of law is the protection and the promotion of communal interaction in the society. Politically, law is a sanctioned rational directive which the members of the political community impose on themselves to be able to realize for all the best possible blossoming (sustainable development) via mutual cooperation.¹⁶⁰ Law is basically communal. It is known to be coercive by the members, but it is understood in the positive sense of being made for the communal good. This is the basic principle of the traditional African legal system.

By the rule of law envisaged for sustainable development in the Niger Delta, one understands the efficient carrying out of the rules by the members of the society. It has two aspects: (I) the individual's and group's free adherence to the dictates of the law, and the adherence acquired above all through good upbringing, moral integrity and good examples from the other members of the society. (II) The efficient application of the corresponding sanctions by those in authority (the judiciary) on those who are found guilty of blatant disobedience to the law.

¹⁶⁰ Iroegbu, P. Communalism: Towards justice in Africa, Owerri, 1996, p.74.

These two aspects are indispensable for the good of the region as a community. The first obviates legalism- i.e. people becoming slaves of the law, forgetting the spirit of the law and doing things only because of the fear of sanction or because they are forced to do so via sanctions. Legalism is a politics of rules which forgets the humane aspects of moral integrity as also important in political formation the second aspect avoids the danger of presumption that one can break the law all the time and get away with it. In this case, if those who transgress that law are left unpunished, the entire system will collapse because those who following the first aspect, freely obey the law, will have reason to think that those who get away with disobedience are profiting from the system while not contributing commensurably to it; or still, the law-abiding citizens would argue that those who flout the law consider themselves superior to others by disobeying without sanction.

In fact, all members of the Niger Delta society, including the oil companies and those in authority must be subject to the law. And really those in authority have greater responsibility to respect the law if they are to achieve the communal good. The very legitimacy of their office lies in this. To exclude themselves from legal ruler-ship would mean regarding themselves as superior members of the society which is contrary to rationality and reasonableness. Without the rule of law, there can be no community. This rule realizes the principle of reasonableness by treating all equally as full members of the society without discrimination. The order that the rule of law can maintain in the region is a greater value of interaction and community within which the communal good including the private good of the members are realizable, and without which none of these is realizable.

The fundamental requirement of the rule of law in the Niger Delta is that the law themselves be just laws. Laws are just when they protect and promote the communal good. For laws to be just, therefore, they must pass the tests of the three ingredients which are for the derivation of the principles of justice. It must also be possible to be observed, if they are to command obedience. In general also, laws must be known to all members of the community. They must be prospective and not retroactive; clear and coherent with one another, relatively general and the application of sanctions must be fair to all, i.e. consistent in treating similar cases similarly. Further, the judiciary should be independent and impartial. This is the

principle of due process. Justice must also be within the reach of all members of the Niger Delta region without the burdens of exorbitant costs of money or time.¹⁶¹

Finally, the ethics of the rule of law for a sustainable development have to be inculcated in all citizens of the region through environmental education, good example and consistent application. It is a *condition sine qua non* for a good functioning of the society in the realization of the values of society, individuality and development.

All violent conflicts- including inter- or intra-ethnic conflicts, hostage-taking, blowing up of pipelines, the occupation of flow stations, militants' confrontation of the oil and gas companies and the government, and so on- have constrained development efforts. Development cannot proceed in a society where militancy and conflicts are the order of the day. The lack of development, however, contributes to the tensions that result in conflicts. This vicious cycle must be broken to realise the Niger Delta's full development potential; to break it is to form a common understanding which can also not be formed without dialogue.

Wenn menschliche Individuen miteinander sprechen oder handeln, ist immer ein Drittes vorausgesetzt, das die jeweilige Kommunikation oder Kooperation trägt und ermöglicht: die gesellschaftliche Ordnung. Das aktuelle Sprechen bezieht sich auf ein Vorhandenes, die gesprochene Sprache, das aktuelle Handeln auf die vorhandenen Verhaltensmuster. Das Individuum hat die Erwartung, dass der Sinn seiner Äußerungen durchschnittlich von seinen Gegenübern verstanden wird. Und umgekehrt glaubt es auch, den Sinn der Äußerungen der Gegenüber zu verstehen. Die Verständigung vollzieht sich in unzähligen Situationen des Lebens spontan, sie funktioniert reibungslos. Verstehenskrisen können durchschnittlich durch Nachfragen: „Was hast du gesagt? Was meinst du, wenn du sagst...?“ aufgefangen werden. Rede und Gegenrede, Handlung und Gegenhandlung greifen ineinander, jeder Reiz findet seine passende Reaktion.¹⁶²

Dialogue is therefore a crucial means of putting things back together in a in the Niger Delta society, which has experienced prolonged military or one-party rule. Really given the damage that military rule had done to the Nigerian political process in general, a process of post-military reconstruction and development should have involved a well thought out plan of social change to which a national dialogue would

¹⁶¹ Ibid. P.76.

¹⁶² Drösser, G. Institutionen und Soziales Handeln, in: Heimbach-Steins, M. (Hrsg.): Christliche Sozialethik, ein Lehrbuch, Bd.1, Regensburg, 2004, p.227.

be central. This will enable the citizens to agree on the common good and the set of values and institutions which can facilitate its pursuit.

In the legitimate quest to have their rights respected, minorities may be driven to seek greater autonomy or even independence; in such delicate circumstances, dialogue and negotiation are the paths for attaining peace¹⁶³

The point of discussion so far is to underscore the need for an alternative route in resolving the Niger Delta conflict as opposed to the ones hitherto. But the search to alternative social and developmental directions requires reflection; it calls for the posing of fundamental questions on the nature and the future of society. Hence, the need for reasoned and open-minded dialogue through which the oil producing communities can begin to find a new path to social and sustainable development.

One cannot deny the fact that it is difficult to conceive in this work, of a better expression of the need for a new beginning in the oil-producing communities. But initiating the process has been a big problem in the Nigerian society. This has been so, largely because of the dominance of the Nigerian political arena by people with vested interest who see such a process as a means of curtailing their access to power and wealth.

4.5. Ethnicity and Sustainable Development in the Region

The task facing the government of Nigeria after her independence from Britain in 1960 was the one of transforming a multi-ethnic society into a national society through the instrumentality of the state. The task of social engineering then was to find a structure of state that would accomplish the goal of sustainable development. A strong state is often deemed desirable.¹⁶⁴ In Nigeria, the hastily carpentered post independent Nigerian institutions of liberal democracy and independence constructions quickly faded and disappeared in the face of growing authoritarianism of both civilian and military regimes.

¹⁶³ Kompendium der Soziallehre der Kirche: politischen Gemeinschaft, menschliche person und Volk, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006, no.387.

¹⁶⁴ Nnoli, O. Ethnicity and democracy in Africa: Intervening variable, Lagos, 1994, pp.46-47.

After the moment of independence, however, competitive elections and the indigenization of the Nigerian bureaucracy began to make ethnicity increasingly important as a basis of political support and access to the higher levels of the state. Even before independence, however, the tenuous ethnic and class coalitions of nationalist movements began to unravel into competing factions struggling for the control over the very material rewards of state power and resources, especially oil in the Niger Delta. The oil in the Niger Delta then can virtually become bottomless financial reservoirs for those who manage them, and for political authorities which head them.¹⁶⁵

“Der nigerianische Fall machte deutlich, wie wichtig es ist, das Gelingen oder Scheitern von demokratischen Prozessen als kombiniertes Resultat diverser Akteursgruppen mit unterschiedlichen Interessen, Weltbildern und unterschiedlichen Machtressourcen zu verstehen; auch Zufälle spielten eine Rolle. Im konkreten Fall ist es stets schwierig zu bestimmen, was die Stärke einer Gruppe ausmacht, was ihre Konstitutionsmerkmale sind- das Klasseninteresse, die berufliche Tätigkeit als Bauer, Händler, Büroarbeiter etc., die ethnische Abstammung, die politische oder soziale Programmatik, der gemeinsame Patron in einem Klientensystem. Denn bestehende Sozialstrukturen verlaufen oft quer zu Differenzierungen wie Schicht und Klasse.“¹⁶⁶

The façade state power after the independence is expressed in an obsession with pomp and theatrical ritual even greater than in its colonial predecessor and in an opaque and arbitrary decision-making process that masks the vulgar, even obscene reality of power from its subjects. The state capacity to convince citizens that restrictions on political expression are needed to preserve order (or to prevent chaos) depends in part on delivering to the populace some of the material benefits of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’.¹⁶⁷

The Niger Delta politics of political tribalism and moral ethnicity became linked to the ability of the ‘big men’ of ethnic communities holding positions in the nation to obtain for their respective communities a significant share of the large-scale collective benefits of development in infrastructure projects of roads, schools, hospitals, etc, as well as the more individual rewards apportioned through the discrete personal contacts of the federal government.

Balancing the contradictions of accumulation and control continues to constrain sustainable development in the rural areas. Neither state power nor ruling coalitions

¹⁶⁵ Bayart, J.F. *The state in Africa: politics of the belly*. London, 2009, p.78.

¹⁶⁶ Neubert, D. *Zivilgesellschaft oder Patron-Klient-Beziehung?* in: Ferdowsi, M., A. (Hrsg.), *Afrika- ein verlorener Kontinent?* Stuttgart, 2004, p.176.

¹⁶⁷ Haugerud, A. *The Culture of Politics*, Cambridge, 1995, pp.76 & 106.

have been organized around transformative projects directed towards the development of the citizens. In Niger Delta the case of economic decline, draconian reforms, the deterioration of already relatively weak state and the delay of distributable resources and the violent conflict in the region, exacerbate reliance on patron/client relations and intensify the inter-ethnic political conflicts of political tribalism.

In the circumstances of economic and political instability, where majority of the citizens face daily the insecurities and uncertainties of life, kinship and ethnicity, provide networks of mutual support and trust, defining a political community from within which demands are made both on the state, the oil companies and its leadership. For the ethnic community and identity to be sustained, however, there must be real material, political and symbolic goods to deliver. The Niger Delta elites/politicians and people of the communities, rulers and ruled, both draw on the same moral contract embedded in the debates of moral ethnicity to legitimize or challenge the distribution of wealth and power (this is in Nigeria today known as the zoning of political offices). Externally, elites are expected to be the spokesmen of 'their people', defending their interests in national institutions and getting for them their share of the 'national cake'. Internally, as a dominant class they are expected to meet the moral obligations of reciprocity to both kin and other members of the community.¹⁶⁸ Patronage network in the political landscape not only distribute material benefits, but also are expected to sustain an intimacy of relations between rulers and ruled, a semblance of the personal ties of the traditional *gemeinschaft* rather than the impersonal relations of the sustainable development that captures the society as a *gesellschaft*. Distribution of patronage by politicians, the wealthy and powerful both display their status and subordinates to them those who accept their largesse.

The increasing intensity of inter-ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta has been matched by the aggravation of the intra-ethnic conflicts of moral ethnicity over social obligations of redistribution between classes. The government is almost incapable of creating new programmes and positions or even paying existing officials, while patrons with declining resources become increasingly unwilling and unable to sustain distributions to their clients. In the face of an increasingly materialistic and opportunistic appropriation of oil resources for purely private and personal gain, the

¹⁶⁸ Nnoli, O. *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, Lagos, 1994, pp.18-19.

relations of trust underpinning patronage networks are threatened by growing cynicism and corruption. The poor place greater demands on their politicians, the oil companies and wealthier kin for aid, while families bitterly divide over the inheritance of land and property in the region. The broader conflict between the rich and the poor finds expression in acts of resistance and violence, or even in the confrontation between the elites and masses in such public rituals of politics as the rural village meetings. The conflict of classes within the ethnic communities is also manifested with the continued existence of sub-ethnic groupings within the larger group and with a potential for fragmentation as aggrieved sections demand their turn to 'eat'.

'The politics of the belly' can be a metaphor that sums up the constant reference and analogies in political discourse in Niger Delta to politics as 'eating' or 'devouring', of getting one's share of the national resources or 'national cake'. These political cultural forms themselves encapsulate the personal, materialistic and opportunistic character politics, and the relative unimportance, if not irrelevance, of ideology, principal or policies that may enable sustainable development in the Niger Delta. ¹⁶⁹ To survive in such a dangerous terrain requires both support and protection, which is precisely what patrons and clients are supposed to provide for each other, cemented by ties of kinship and ethnicity, and the reason why Nigerian politicians invest enormous wealth in developing and maintaining social networks in the region. The contradiction of the politics of the belly in the Niger Delta is that rich and poor, elites and citizens share the same state opportunistic and materialistic view of politics, governance and the state.

Instead of the much needed political and economic reforms that will support viable development in the Niger Delta, it is sad to note that the patronage systems, and ethnic identities that have developed over the past century produced the vicious circle of what may be termed 'uncivil nationalism' which is by purely materialistic and opportunistic relationships to the local 'big men' through the control of patronage.

What is missing in the Niger Delta is the development of a trans-ethnic public arena grounded in universalistic norms and the essential relations of social trust in the disinterested competence that are the foundation of the day to day transactions of both development and the society. Instead, the Niger Delta society is stalled in a heaving, chaotic pluralism of institutional and cultural elements in which public institutions have little legitimacy and trust of others is low. In the circumstance of

¹⁶⁹ Bayart, J.F. *The state in Africa: Politics of the belly*. London, 2009, p.66.

uncertainty, instability violence and intense, even desperate, competition for resources, people in the Niger Delta region attempt to find in their communities and identities a degree of support and security, and some semblance of cultural and moral coherence in their quest of resource control. The arbitrary and authoritarian use of state power to quell the conflict in the region and to accumulate wealth reflects the limited development of the impersonal exchange relations of modern democratic tenets in the communities, and of the government as an impersonal and impartial arbiter of both political and violent conflicts in the Niger Delta Region.

As from the analysis so far, the reliance on the loyalties and personal ties of kinship and ethnicity in the Niger Delta also represent both attempts to find individual security and defensive cultural and political reactions against the disruptions of the social forces of modern democracy and development. Moreover, the desire to find stability and meaning in a turbulent social and political region, also finds expression in the spread of violent militant groups and camps that reinforces ethnic cleavages.

Finally, formal democratization in the form of parties and elections in the region, not only are compatible with continuing ethnic 'clientelism', but also often brings destabilizing surge of ethnic claims and conflicts, suppressed by previous authoritarian regimes, that can discredit the process of liberalization itself and invite renewed authoritarian interventions.

To attain peace, a sustainable and viable development in the Niger Delta , the Nigerian democratic process must be genuine and well grounded; but sad to note that efforts to promote democratization in Nigeria so far have targeted the wrong institutional levels and missed entirely those where bureaucratic authoritarianism, patronage and ethnicity are entrenched. So long as this persists, the government and the citizens may not develop the critical relations of trust the will help in bringing development, and will continue to rely on the personalized, protective ties of 'clientelism' as a method of solving the Niger Delta environmental crisis and sustainable development problems.

4.6. SELF-RELIANCE and SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

From the discussions so far, the emphasis has been to make a case of a sustainable development programming that has to be focused on overriding issues of equity, equality and ethnicity in the distribution of the gains of good governance and

developmental efforts in the Niger Delta. A lot of concern has also been expressed about the rural poor especially within the oil producing communities and the imperatives of several baseline requirements for human development. These include the participatory development strategies to tackle rural poverty, with social equality and civil participation viewed as essential to well-rounded socio-economic development.

That orientation here leads can be called 'self-reliance' or in other words a 'people-centred development'; 'participatory development' and 'sustainable development'. The principles of self-reliance holds that meaningful development must be people-based or human centred, since development entail the full utilization of people's human and material resources for the satisfaction of various (human) needs. What is urgently needed in the Niger Delta is a kind of development process that puts the individuals in the very centre of development effort; a kind of development that will make the individual citizens of the Niger Delta responsible, and a process that is both human and humane. That does not alienate them from their society and culture; but that increases their self-confidence and self-reliance; and sustains the needs of the society on an equitable and just manner. Above all, a citizen in this region demands a break with the past and the evolution of a truly indigenous pattern of development and lifestyle as the condition *sine qua non* for the attainment of higher levels of living.

Self-reliance as I am trying to advocate as a theory of sustainable development for the oil-producing communities of Nigeria implies the pursuit of a basically internally oriented; directed and sustained developmental philosophy and action. This must be anchored on the society and its people, knowing who they are, where they are, and what they have, for whom they are planning and what they desire and hope for. This implies that people within this region in engaging their lives at all levels, should be motivated by the internal dynamics of their society.

A self-reliant process of development as I am are trying to advocate here should be people oriented, and not elite oriented, which has been the bane of planning and social initiatives in the Niger Delta since the colonial times. This means taking into consideration where most of the people are (their environment) and challenging their problems and changes to their well being. Realizing this call for initiatives will involve evolving programs that will touch the real people without unnecessary obsession with statistics. It means taking the people on board in evolving socio-economic and

political policies. Thus self-reliant development in the Niger Delta and perhaps for the whole of the Nigerian society will imply the capacity for autonomous decisions by the people of the Niger Delta who are the real agents of their own development and ultimate beneficiaries. All aim at maximizing personal responsibility, independence and minimizing dependence. The people know better the opportunity cost of following certain orientations and effects on their personal and community lives. In a self-reliant society,

“Keine amorphe Menge, eine träge Masse, die manipuliert und instrumentalisiert werden kann, sondern eine Gesamtheit von Personen, von denen jede einzelne- ,an ihrem eigenen Platz und ihrer eigenen Weise‘- die Möglichkeit hat, sich über die öffentliche Sache eine eigene Meinung zu bilden, und die Freiheit, ihr eigenes politisches Empfinden zum Ausdruck zu bringen und es so zur Geltung zu bringen, wie es dem Gemeinwohl entspricht. Das Volk lebt von der Fülle des Lebens der Menschen, aus denen es besteht, von denen jeder(...) eine Person ist, die sich ihrer eigenen Verantwortung und ihrer eigenen Überzeugungen bewusst ist.¹⁷⁰

This is so imperative because people for instance, may need to take decisions which reflect the balance among economic efficiency, stability, human well being and environmental integrity and equity considerations.

A people oriented and self-reliant development in the Niger Delta today must start by addressing people's fundamental and foundational needs, or what can be called basic needs, not the wants of the elite or the wants imposed from external sources, needs directly related to sustain and improve the standard of living. The Niger Delta is littered or defaced with wastefulness, abandoned multimillion white elephant projects, bogus systems and other externally induced government paraphernalia and obsession with international grandeur which does nothing to improve the quality of life and the socio-economic well being of the people. These automatically impose consciously or unconsciously false tastes, false consumption habits, false planning and false organizational system and facilitate corruptive practices. For Uwalaka, a state of affairs, choices or activities are said to be false when they are ill adapted or unsuitable or even counterproductive to the real needs of the people at any point in time and incapable of responding adequately to the people's developmental

¹⁷⁰Kompendium der Soziallehre der Kirche: die Grundlage und das Ziel der Politischen Gemeinschaft, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006, Nr. 384.

challenges, from the point of view of who they are, how they are, where they are, and what they want to be.¹⁷¹

Hence the need for the Nigerian society to target those goals and choices and aspirations which the society can effectively and extensively deliver to the people which are not intrinsically alien or serve alien interests and objectives. It means devising mechanism and solutions which will lead to negating all undemocratic, oppressive, exploitative methods of the reigning dominant ideologies and their developmental patterns.

The implication of my idea of the Niger Delta sustainable development being determined essentially by its proper internal dynamics is that Nigerian development efforts and policies will move within the citizens' proper temporality. In short, it will regain control of the citizens' existential space and time lost since Nigeria came in contact with colonization and its ideology.

In fact, the spectre of confusions, disorder and apparent anarchy in the heart of the Nigerian body polity today can be traceable to the fact that the nation has been dragged along a developmental path (political, cultural, socio-economic, and social), dictated by the priorities and timing of what happens outside the daily lives of the citizens. So the pressures, changes, demands, influences, brought to bear on Nigerian society have become so fast and so congested that the citizens have lost control and are just being dragged along.

Furthermore, the dynamism of Western Modern society lay in separation of time and space, this contrast with the traditional societies including Nigeria where time is measured by what happens in society. Space in these societies (Nigeria inclusive) has to do with a particular locality. Within modernity came the invention of a system of time that was not tied to specific places with their people, customs and events.¹⁷²

One can see immediately that such conception of time introduced in the Nigerian society, made the people unable to control the movement of their history and developmental orientation. It makes them a historical appendix to a history that is constructed, affected and realized by other peoples' interest. It makes policies and developmental plans, at times unconnected, or unsuitable to the life of the actual people and where they are. To this effect, Nigeria today tend to operate political and

¹⁷¹ Uwalaka, J., *Philosophy of Indigenization as the anchor for a philosophy of progress and development in Africa*, in: *Towards the Indigenization of Education in Africa*, International Symposia by Whelan Research Academy, Okere, T.I., & Njoku, C.A. (eds.), Owerri, 2006, p.60.

¹⁷² Ibid. p.61.

economic policies, without real development, and the obsessions with statistics and no impact on the real people and then attempt to subject the society to the same model of development. Thus the separation of time and space meant that the history of the local peoples' experience was no longer an affair viewed from inside as participants but from the outside as non-participant observers. Being views from outside means that the data of history of the local people are impersonal forces whereas viewed from the inside, is for them to become part of the overall destiny of human persons and communities; for their well-being and progress. So the question of time here in our view is not merely quantitative but qualitative, social and organic. So in my view, it is only in moving within its own time frame that the Nigerian society could develop an integrated sustainable developmental orientation where all aspects of the society will evolve in tandem and in accordance with the peoples own aspirations and to the greater advantage of the well-being and fulfilment of the people. A situation where the people are made to adopt certain externally induced measures in order to speedily attain the so called economic and political heights of another society without taking into consideration the environmental, social, psychological and cultural demands and consequences on the people is nothing but a destructive not civilization or progressive step to sustainable development. It is alienating, creates destabilization and kills indigenous creativity and personal responsibility and also social harmony.

It is sad to note that this has been the fate of the Nigerian society and more still for those in the Niger Delta region. So for Nigerian society to make 'catching up' with the western developmental train the basis or motivating element in its developmental orientation is surely in my view an upheaval task. For trying to do so may create two impasse- firstly is that the western development train does not stop to wait for the Nigerian society to catch up, but it is rather increasing every day, and thereby making the Nigerian efforts to catch up with it rather futile and unproductive. Secondly, the Nigerian illusive program of 'catching up' has left it as a mere appendix living on handouts which fall from the master's table creating a terrible dependence and also leaving Nigerians especially those at the Niger Delta terribly poorer.

So the simple proposal here is that the Nigerian society and perhaps other Africans rather forget the idea of 'catching up' mentality of the Western developmental paradigms, but rather stop and reflect on the type of developmental system,

direction and speed that will take the Nigerian people and society to the level of sustainable development and type of well-being she wants, in openness to all democratic values that is authentically good. For instance, not every western invention, value or even technology, could be adopted or introduced into the Nigerian society at any given time, because certain importations or novelties will require the prior existence of certain conditions or other necessary elements. For when a society is not prepared or ready for a certain adoptions or adaptations, the new introductions could cause uncontrollable chaos with negative consequences, inimical to the common good.

Hence, for a proper sustainable development to gain root in the Niger Delta society, transformation and new introductions must take into consideration, other social and existential realities of the people. For it is only when the people can direct the orientation of their life within their own capacities and possibilities according to their own choosing and in the light of their own aspirations that their being and humanity, their specific existential vocations and well-being in the world, being of their authenticity and self-revelation, the truth of their beings as Nigerians, begin to unfold.

„Die klassisch-liberale Politiktheorie der Moderne zielte auf die strukturelle Ermöglichung der Selbstverwirklichung von Einzelindividuen. Gesetze sollen das individuelle Freiheitshandeln nur soweit beschränken, dass es mit dem Freiethandeln der anderen Individuen Kompatibel bleibt... Der Einzelne ist damit freies Subjekt seiner wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen, und er ist ganz ebenso frei, die Art und Weise seiner Intimverhältnisse zu wählen und zu gestalten.“¹⁷³

Also if the Nigerian society hopes to make some honest effort towards a sustainable development without being alienated, if it must be self-reliant, it highly suggest that it must find a way to creatively harness available resources both as gift of nature and product of the citizens' creative genius and energy in such a way that the common good and inclusive humanism may be promoted. Such resources will include natural capital, physical capital, cultural capital, and even spiritual capital. Without contradicting ourselves, we have before argued that ethnicity may even affect development in Nigeria; this argument is based on the fact that government carries out skewed policies in favour of the so the so-called disadvantaged ethnic groups at the expense of the progressing groups. But we have to note that the resources used

¹⁷³ Drösser, G. Institutionen und Soziales Handeln, in: Heimbach-Steins, M. (Hrg.): Christliche Sozialethik, ein Lehrbuch, Bd.1, Regensburg, 2004, p.242.

for development of any society are not evenly distributed by nature. So to counter what is in the Nigerian society called 'marginalization' by the less 'nature-gifted' groups, the government consciously designed and implemented policies to favour them. But on the other hand, what we do suggest is for the government to provide a general framework that will allow every ethnic group its self-determination and development rights to develop at its own pace using its own resources and capacities such that it will witness consistent improvements in its environment, people, resources and occupations. When this improvement is targeted at the real needs of the people, then they can begin to witness some transformations from within, under their mastery and control resulting in a proper development that is sustainable. This is the essential meaning of looking inwards and the onus of self-development. This strategy can be plausible since,

„Das ausgehend vom Vertrauen auf eigenen Kräfte...die eigenen Ressourcen zur Befriedigung der menschlichen Grundbedürfnisse einsetzen will. Self-reliance ist verbunden mit der Suche nach einem eigenen, den jeweiligen Traditionen eines Lands angepassten Entwicklungsweg.“¹⁷⁴

So the Nigerian society like all societies, have the wherewithal to develop itself and attain the level of material progress that can offer its citizens a happy life and prosperity. All that Nigeria needs and must strive for is to get mastery of their local environment and unlock the natural physical, mineral, human social riches and endogenous endowments that nature has prodigally and prodigiously lavished on her.

4.7. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.7.1. Individual Responsibility:

As I have earlier observed that to assume responsibility for a stable and sustainable development in the Nigerian society; individual citizens need proper and honest information. Public information especially regarding the environment and better modes of living as in the Niger Delta is necessary but it is not enough. There are instances where the citizens are aware of certain dangers arising from their conducts (for instance, breaking of oil-pipelines, attacks on oil installations, violent intra-ethnic conflicts etc.), but they are not committed to getting rid of them. Rather

¹⁷⁴ Nuscheler, F. Entwicklungspolitik, Bonn, 2005, p.631.

they approach the situation with resignation because they have learned to live with it. "A citizen then has to ask himself when taking decisions which affect his own person or the community as a whole how far he can trust the facts provided by the media, parties, environmental groups, scientists and so on and the solutions to propose"¹⁷⁵

Consequently, most fundamental to the establishment of a sound framework for sustainable development in the Niger Delta region and also for the entire Nigerian society is the change of attitude of citizens themselves. Recognizing that individual's perception and behaviour are not independent of the social milieu of which he is a part, it becomes necessary to induce the correct behaviour through socialization to ensure that only the accepted behaviour is attempted in the society.

As Ebere opined; with its North and south, its tribal and ethnic divisions, and boisterous, argumentative people, Nigeria traditionally has been one of Africa's most ungovernable, undisciplined countries.¹⁷⁶ The argument here is that discipline is a necessary condition of growth and development. Lack of it among the citizens, who also forms the society, has disastrous consequences. Thus indiscipline with its allied ill of lack of ethical rectitude stands on the way to progress and sustainable development.

It is very unfortunate to note also that some Nigerians citizens display a remarkable lack of discipline. "Unfortunately, contemporary Nigerian society is beset with low ethical standards. Lying, cheating, stealing, robbery, irresponsibility...just to mention a few have become staples of Nigerian life. The situation demands urgent, concerted and purposeful action."¹⁷⁷

Its causes are both plural and varied and include: composite cultural backgrounds with differing ethical standards; the coming of many cultures which bring about breakdown of traditional ethical code and value, yielding place to an amorphous situation in which a new set of cultures is being formulated; the devastating influence of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war which let loose a tendency towards indiscipline and lack of regard for the sacredness of life and the dignity of the human person and last but not the least is the influence of sudden wealth on a nation just fresh from the shackles of colonial domination such that there is stampede and keen competition to

¹⁷⁵ Furger, F., & Wiemeyer, J. World Economy and Social Ethics, in: German Bishop's Conference Research Group on the Universal Tasks of the Church, Bonn, 1995, p.18.

¹⁷⁶ Ebere, R. Public Complain Commission Receive Petitions, in: Nigerian Vanguard, 24.3.88, p.6.

¹⁷⁷ Nduka, O., & Iheoma, E.O. New Perspectives in Moral Education, Lagos, 1983, p.9.

acquire it, leaving room for unethical and undisciplined manners in the process. Some causes of indiscipline among Nigerians are: the traumatic and dislocating experiences of the Biafran-Nigerian civil war, the decline of parental authority and domestic values, the collapse of discipline in the Nigerian educational institutions, inadequate instructional resources for education, socio-political immaturity and the weakness of the adult population, tribalism and other forms of social discrimination, poor work ethic and philosophy, consumerism and mundane values of modern society, militant materialism and other vices.¹⁷⁸

The above is a fair summary of the causes of indiscipline in the Nigerian society which as such stifles development. This leads to the conclusion that system or solution alone suffices to deal decisively with sustainable development in the Nigerian society without citizens striving to lead an ethical and disciplined lives; for “the success of any particular unit depends upon its individual and communal acceptance, understanding, and use, rather than upon the simplicity or complexity of its design. The key to successful achievement of a sustainable development programme is that it depends not only upon the intent of the government, but also on motivation by people themselves.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, “The voluntary initiative of individuals and of free groups should be integrated with state enterprises.”¹⁸⁰ Therefore, how to reach, mobilise and motivate the people is as important and indeed, more fundamental to their actual participation and disciplined lives in planning, implementing and maintaining any given developmental programme.

So the point we are trying to make here is that every Nigerian citizen is in essence a person, and in his person uniqueness is simultaneously related in essence to the Nigerian society, the building principle of sustainable development in Nigeria rests on “an original and characteristic state of relation and connection” between a citizen and the Nigerian society and permits “in no way a simple reduction to one of the two quantities.”¹⁸¹ From the characteristically dual direction of the tie which constitutes the metaphysical essence of society, it follows that “persons (citizens) are tied to the whole (the society) from an inner fullness of value, but in such a way that the whole

¹⁷⁸ Iwe, N.S.S. The Moral Constraints on Effective Moral-Civic Education in Nigeria, in Otonti, A.N., & Iheoma, E.O. Op.Cit. P.181.

¹⁷⁹ German Advisory Council on Global Change: World in Transition: Basic Structure of Global People-Environment Interactions, Annual Report, 1993, p.165.

¹⁸⁰ Gaudium et Spes. Rome, 1965, nr.66.

¹⁸¹ Höffner, J. Christian Social Teaching, Ordo Socialis, Köln, 1983, p.37.

only has its own fullness of value in its dependence on the personal fullness of value of the members.”¹⁸²

The salient point I have been stretching here is that the dignity of every Nigerian citizen consists of the ability to shoulder responsibility for their own lives as good and law abiding citizens. According to the conception of the Catholic social teaching, it is the right and duty of individual person to bear the first responsibility “to provide the necessities of life for himself and his dependents.”¹⁸³ Nevertheless, owing to the condition of the Nigerian society, especially with resources mainly channelled to the governments and its agents, the individual alone can longer guarantee the social security of life without the assistance of the institutions of the society as a whole. Still it is not correct to present governmental assistance as a phenomenon of degeneration and as a sign of the loss of individuality and a lack of self responsibility for the citizens. It is merely to a large extent a question of an adaptation of the form of the existence and the way of life of modern society to the altered social and economic circumstances.

But also sad to note is that owing to the ethnic divisions the Nigerian society finds itself, wide circles of Nigerian citizens today are filled with a conspicuous desire for public assistance and thereby losing the sense of individual responsibility. But we have to further stress the point that reason and truth should inspire every Nigerian to provide and to accomplish itself what it can in its own home, in its own community and in Nigeria in general. The Nigerian institutions as a matter of fact should be a reserve, protection and aid, a refuge site and support of free, independent, and self-responsible people and also secure, encourage and foster the efforts of the citizens towards the success of his/ her life.

4.7.2. Public Participation

One can hardly underestimate the fact that to effect any change in the life-style of the people in the Niger Delta region for sustainable development, the citizens themselves have to basically co-operate by getting involved in the whole process of change and decision-making: “Involving the public in both the design and the implementation of environmental and development projects are critical for two

¹⁸² Grundlach, G. Solidarismus, in: Edozien, N.N. African Values Applied to Modern Issues of Sustainability and Corporate Governance, Enugu, 2007, p.329.

¹⁸³ John XIII. Mater et Magistra, Rome, May 15, 1961, nr.55.

reasons: first, ethically and ideologically people should have the freedom to choose their own direction of development and to influence their means of livelihood. Second, in recent decades development practitioners have come to realize that top-down development projects that clearly exclude stakeholders from the policy-making and implementation arena are detrimental to the success of these projects.”¹⁸⁴

This is what we mean here by public participation. The advantages of public participation towards a sustainable development in Nigeria are obvious. We envisage that it will lead to a more equitable policies and improve the likelihood that developmental projects and programs will succeed. In the Niger Delta, for instance, people’s view about their own environment will strongly influence their management and reduce tensions and frictions. From our findings during the course of this work, the oil-producing communities will likely support environmental and developmental programs and projects when they reflect their local beliefs, values and ideologies and for the use of the community. Even involving local communities will also give policymakers and researchers a better and broader understanding of issues and give them access to new sources of knowledge and expertise. When mechanisms for conflict resolution exist and the community’s voice can be heard, people may be less likely to sabotage oil facilities, because they will be more convinced that doing so may likely affect their own lives and environment.¹⁸⁵

Research has shown that developmental project from which the public has been excluded during the policymaking and implementation phases have frequently failed. Participation we mean here is more than consulting a few ‘local big-men’, local technocrats or government officials about a document on paper, or talking with government (as some oil companies in the Niger Delta do), but it should also involve consulting the people on the ground to obtain a balanced picture of peoples’ differing views. True participation ensures that society considers its own problems and formulates its own solutions.¹⁸⁶

Developmental project design and implementation in Nigeria for some time now has been predominantly characterised by top-down approach with the effect that there is insufficient popular participation on the part of the populace. This perhaps offers explanation for the failure of such projects and programmes as Operation Feed the

¹⁸⁴ Furtado Jose’ I. dos, R., Belt, T., & Jammi, R. Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability: Policies and Principles for Durable Equilibrium, Washington, D.C., 2000, p.44.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. P.46.

¹⁸⁶ Falloux, F., & Talbot, L.M. Crisis and Opportunity: Environment and Development in Africa, London, 1993, p.101.

Nation, War against Indiscipline, Economic and Financial Crime Commission, Amnesty Program for Militants in the Niger Delta etc.: “Therefore, it is clear that what is referred to as public participation in Nigeria falls short of integrating or seeking the people’s opinion; rather it involves asking the people’s co-operation in a program that has already been decided upon without any input from the people.”¹⁸⁷ The people are always sceptical about the arbitrary inclusion (from above) of civilians, chiefs, or prominent professionals in the Nigerian developmental boards. While regarding them as nothing but government agents, public participation is for the Nigerian citizens only a public relations program. Thus the resistance to participation by some local communities and social groups often comes from unhappy past experiences with experts.¹⁸⁸

Through motivation, Communities in the Niger Delta are sensitised to accept the responsibility for promoting, protecting and even maintaining a healthy environment and development in their area.

“Effective public involvement rather than merely keeping the people informed about the ongoing projects or persuading them into manual labour, is highly desirable especially in projects that require the people to alter their learned behaviour. For sustainable development to succeed, the people need to be involved in the planning and implementation of the plans and educated about the consequences of following their previously learned behaviours.”¹⁸⁹ This means that “development projects work best when the intended beneficiaries are listened to and their ideas respected, and indeed, when the projects are initiated, designed and managed by the beneficiaries themselves,”¹⁹⁰ One can also see that this can equally act as a way of correcting the wrong attitude of the citizens waiting for the government to do certain things which ordinarily they can do for themselves in order to guarantee a safe and better living for themselves. It can also be one of the best instruments which the people of the oil-producing areas of Nigeria can organise themselves into pressure groups that are environmentally minded and active for a sustainable development.

Popular participation for sustainable development is necessary both in certain macroeconomic political decisions and even down the problems of the environment in the Niger Delta. Unfortunately, while sometimes government and its agencies

¹⁸⁷ Olowomeye, R. *The Management of solid waste in Nigeria cities*, New York, 1991, p.146.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Falloux, F., & Talbot, L.M. P.115.

¹⁸⁹ Olowomeye, R. *Ibid.* P.182.

¹⁹⁰ Dinges, J. *Participation in Urban Development : Decision Making by Communities of the Boor*, in: Olowomeye, R. *Ibid.* P.145.

regard real participation by the public as a threat, thereby resisting or forbidding it, on another case, they may not even be interested to put in place effective mechanisms for such participations. So NGOs (Non-governmental organizations), religious organizations and other non-political associations (which I will later discuss) may be of immense help and prove more successful in the development of local participation, especially as pioneers of “bottom-up” approaches and innovators in the development and implementation of sustainable development in Nigeria. We will look into such approach later in this work.

Some practical steps may help to illustrate that it is only when the people are actively involved that they are able to appreciate their responsibility and action. For instance, while the government perhaps in the Niger Delta takes responsibility of providing the citizenry with such basic facilities and infrastructure that help sustain a better and healthier living such as water, electricity, waste collection points, hospitals and schools, it is the duty of the citizen not to vandalize these things, but to protect them and keep them safe. It is equally the duty of the citizens to trust their leaders and support their initiatives for better development, and this can do by paying their taxes as good citizens and maintaining law and order within their communities.

Chapter V: The Civil Society in Environmental Conflict Management

5.1. Analysis of Civil Society in the Region

I have so tried to logically analyze the inevitability of environmental and social conflicts in the social and political structures of the people of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria owing to the gregarious nature of this society and the constant quest by the stake-holders in the oil resources of the area (the government, Multinational oil companies, the international community who are in constant need of oil, the militant youths and perhaps criminals) to satisfy various interests which most often merge with that of another; and this social condition has given rise to the situation where civil society should be involved in the management of the conflicts so as not to endanger the development of the people. The presence of the civil society in the Niger Delta can positively contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the region.

A civil society consists of those people who are above the personal realm of the family or ethnic group but beneath the state. The term encompasses public organizations such as firms, religious organizations, labour unions, interest groups, and even recreational bodies.¹⁹¹ Such institutions as Luc Reychler enumerated above are part of the collective life of the Niger Delta society but are voluntary in character and autonomous from the government. When civil society is absent in any society, there are only two groups left in this society: the rulers and the ruled.

Civil society refers to a set of self organized intermediary groups that are: relatively independent of both public authorities and private units (for instance oil companies or ethnic units); they are capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in defence or promotion of the interests or passions; they do not seek to replace either state agencies or private companies or to accept responsibility for governing the polity as a whole; and finally they agree to act within re-established rules of a 'civil nature' that is conveying mutual respect.¹⁹² The Nigerian civil society encompasses the media, the business sector, academic institutions, clan and kinship circles, consumer advocates, community development initiatives, environmental movements, ethnic lobbies, faith-based organisations, human rights groups, labour unions, community-based organisations, peace movements, etc. In actual fact, the civil society in Nigeria can be a political space where every Nigerian voluntary association can deliberately seek to shape the rules that govern one or the other aspects of social life, not excluding the situation in the Niger Delta region. Civil society in Nigeria must be seen as an opposite of despotism, it have to be a space in where social groups could exist and move, and an existence that would ensure softer, more tolerable conditions for people in the Nigerian society.

Suffice to say that it is the part of the contract of the Nigerian government with her citizens to ensure that there is peace and a clean environment in the Niger Delta. Unfortunately, the government itself constitutes a primary source of conflict. This is expected because being the supreme coercive power in the Niger Delta for the exploitation of the Niger Delta environment by the privileged Nigerian elites and the Multinational oil companies; the government lends itself as an instrument of oppression with which the dominant economic class expropriates the people and

¹⁹¹ Reychler, L. Democratic peace-building and conflict prevention: The devil is in transition, 1999, Leuven, p.102.

¹⁹² Schmitter, P. Civil society East and West, in: Ibid.

villages of the Niger Delta. This further escalates the struggle by the local inhabitants who want a fair share of the economic gains accruing from the oil in their land and also a clean environment for their living. This results in a clash of interests which in the Niger Delta has become a full blown conflict, violence, militant activities and criminality in the region.

The relationship between civil society and conflicts in the any society cannot be underestimated. The two one can say are intertwined in the sense that once there is one, there is bound to be the other, and therefore compliment each other's activities in a region like the Niger Delta.

Some suggestions can be made here on certain roles the civil society has to play in short, medium and long-term peace-building, and for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta. The presence of civil society will certainly affect the installation and consolidation of genuine democracy; since its presence in the Nigerian pluralistic society implies that the norms of autonomy, collective action, non-usurpation and civility will be operational in different ways and produce different systems of intermediation. A Nigerian society which can be referred to be democratic is one which is characterized by the independence of the societal self-organization, including the representatives of the media and their accessibility to different social groups and points of view; the public accountability and internal democracy of powerful private corporations such as the oil companies; the degree of political awareness of the citizen body and the extent of its public participation; the democratic nature of the political parties and culture and of the educational system.

The civil society can in the Niger Delta collaborate with other agencies in organising emergency relief for displaced persons and other victims of environmental disaster and militant conflict, but with a caveat that it should be done with a sensitive attention to local peculiarities and prevalent situation so as not to provoke distrust among the local populace. In the pursuit of peace in the Niger Delta, civil societies without ethnic linkages and sentiments can be of good services into negotiation so as to popularise peace deals, put pressure on the oil companies, government, militants and belligerents and mobilise popular support for the peace process. The civil society can also assist in the process of demilitarisation, demobilisation and adaptation to civil life for demobilised militants and the Niger Delta restive youths. They can also in the Niger Delta help to restore basic social services like primary

health care, education; create awareness and consciousness in the Niger Delta villages and communities through enlightenment about the dangers of vandalization of oil pipe-lines and facilities, on the need of dialogue in bringing the much need development, about the futility of militancy and violent conflicts.

There are various strands of the civil society that can be part of conflict management in the Niger Delta which has gone beyond the capacity of the Nigerian government to intervene. These are “non-governmental, citizen-oriented organisations advocating peace, reconciliation, good governance and co-existence...on the basis of mutual recognition and/ or the use of dispute-resolution strategies as a means of addressing...conflicts”.¹⁹³

Because of the peculiar nature of the Niger Delta environment and conflict which has often been revisited in this work, there are three major categories of civil society organisations that can be of immense importance in the region: those in the human rights and advocacy sector, those in the humanitarian and service organisations; and those that can mediate and pave the way for formal peace and reconciliations in the region. These civil rights organisations I will recommend, have to be essentially designed so as to monitor various conflicts in the region and to provide early warnings and insight into a particular conflict; convene the adversarial parties and stakeholders in the region a neutral platform for dialogue; pave the way for mediation; carry out environmental education and training for conflict resolution; building indigenous capacity to cope with conflict resolution; and foster the development of the rule of law.¹⁹⁴

Worthy to note is that in the Niger Delta case, frictions may also likely arise between civil organisations and the government. In Nigeria, most government officials have serious reservations against the civil organisations because of their non-dependence on, and non-consultation with government. This is because the civil organisations make moral claims that are in opposition to those held by the powerful oil companies and the Nigerian bureaucratic political elites. What is more, they challenge those forces that promote environmental degradation, disunity, discrimination, confusion, marginalisation, bad governance, dehumanisation, and underdevelopment in the region. As a result, the civil organisations are at greater risk of antagonism from the

¹⁹³ Gidron, M.N.S. Institute for Dispute Resolution, Hamburg, 1999, p.276.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Ibid. P.227.

Nigerian state, the oil companies and other organisations that make counter claims.¹⁹⁵

5.2. Civil Society Groups in the Niger Delta

5.2.1. Women in Peace Building Programme (WIPBP)

The civil society group have called on the Nigerian government to enact a law making un-approved arms importation into the country a criminal offence; and to enact a bill to monitor accountability in arms transaction in government security agencies. Their slogan is: **Arms Know No Gender**; and they are out to raise awareness on the impact of small arms to women and children in the Niger Delta and also to expose the dangers of proliferation of small arms in the region. They explore the origin of International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament in Europe in early 1980s,¹⁹⁶ which they linked to the realities of an average woman in the Niger Delta; and they often urge their participants, audience and well-wishers to join hands with **WIPBP** to make the '**Arms Know No Gender Campaign**' have more impact in the Niger Delta region.

To them, in the Niger Delta, women and children suffer disproportionately from firearms violence either directly or indirectly, in that women suffer displacement, molestation and sexual violence, also becoming breadwinners at the death of husbands, lost sons, daughters and loved ones, and being killed or maimed for life, all of which have lasting psychological impacts on their lives. This situation sometimes results in women being compelled to take up arms in the Niger Delta and to support militants, beyond being victims.¹⁹⁷

Thus, **WIPBP** in the Niger Delta hopes to improve the mechanisms for the control, transfer and circulation of arms for better protection of people and goods, in conformity with international laws, norms/conventions and standards; and in the Niger Delta communities and villages, to reinforce security for the reduction of the supply, the demand and the circulation of arms. Thus, they mapped out strategies in

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Okoye, D. Peace Support Organisations in Nigeria, in: Ikejiani-Clark, M. (ed.), *Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria*, Channels Island United Kingdom, 2009, p.253.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. P.254.

which the campaign can have full impact in the region, thereby reducing some situations of armed violence in the area.

The women in peace building programme call on more women groups to join hands to form a strong network to monitor, report and fight the proliferation of arms beginning from the Niger Delta. The appeal is strong in asking womenfolk to be involved in creating an awareness programmes on the effect of armed conflict on women and children in the Niger Delta.

Similarly, WIPBP are working to present a Bill to the Nigerian Parliament that will go a long way in monitoring arms importation into Nigeria by militants and criminals; and also to monitor accountability in arms transaction in government security agencies; and to put in place mechanisms to domesticate and implement the Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination and violence against women in the Niger Delta.

5.2.2. The Niger Delta Civil Society Coalition

This civil society coalition launched in the Niger Delta communities a campaign to reduce the number of illegal weapons in circulation in the region. The campaign which is known in the area as **Mop De Arms Campaign** was aimed to reduce the number of illegal weapons in circulation in the Delta. Among other major objectives is to sensitise the local people on being vigilant to monitor the sources of arms and to try to stop them falling into the hands of minors and young people. This civil society organisation also hopes to set up an amnesty programme on which arms can be handed in without penalty.

5.2.3. The Youth Peace and Nation Building Foundations

This civil society organisation started in the Niger Delta at the inception of the guerrilla warfare in the region. The firmly underscored the point that the culture and environment of the conflict in the region exposes and enlists young people into violent and militant groups. Therefore, they developed a 20-year long Niger Delta

development concept through which children in the region will actively contribute to peace and progress during their entire 20 year of school life/tenure.¹⁹⁸

The concept for peace and development for the civil organisation is to disorient the Niger Delta youths from violence and militancy; and also to empower them for community sprite, peace building and self-actualisation. This civil society organisation propounded a concept where from the age of 5, the Niger Delta children are encouraged and empowered to make positive contributions in their grassroots communities. Through this concept, community-based and oriented children achievements are identified, highlighted, rewarded and replicated through an emerging nationwide community development process. The uniqueness of this concept is accentuated in the fact that children do not necessarily compete for individual or personal recognition, but are collectively contributing to the attainment of peace and development in the Niger Delta. Beyond mere character or behavioural modifications and interventions, this programme works with children to cultivate lifestyles that will encourage them to give back and contribute to their community future.

The Youth Peace and Nation Building Foundations have also made efforts to approach the Ministry of Education of each state of the Niger Delta to accept the concept in schools. So with the directives of the State Ministries of Education, they try to work with school supervisors who are in charge of various education districts and zones, who in turn direct head teachers of schools to assign teachers to them to train and certify them to operate peace clubs at co-curricular activity level in their schools.

5.2.4. The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution

This is another emergent organisation that promises to be a major peace support and development organisation in the Niger Delta region. Their objectives and techniques are aimed in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the region.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. P.256.

This civil society organisation is out to sponsor in the Nigerian Parliament laws, regulation and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the production of small arms and light weapon within the communities and villages of the Niger Delta, and over the export, import, transit retransfer of such weapons, in order to prevent illegal manufacture of and illicit trafficking in these weapons, or their diversion to unauthorised recipients.

They also wish to establish in the Niger Delta region, coordination agencies responsible for policy guidance, research and monitoring of efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade, including aspects of the illicit manufacture, control, trafficking, circulation, brokering, trade, as well as tracing finance, collection and destruction of small arms and weapons.

Also the institute for peace and conflict resolution has also in the Niger Delta taken up the task to identify groups and individuals engaged in the illegal manufacture, trade, stockpiling, transfer, possession, as well as financing for acquisition, of illicit small arms and light weapons, and take legal action under appropriate law against such groups and individuals.

They have also tried to develop and implement effective disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes for militant youths in the area, including effective collection, control, storage and destruction of small arms and light weapons, as well as address the special needs of children affected by the Delta conflict.

5.2.5. Religious Bodies

When focussing on the civil society in Nigeria, attention must not only be given to secular NGOs but as well as to the role of religious organizations. No discussion of the Nigeria political culture can make abstraction the role of religion a source of values, since it is an important component of the Nigerian political culture. Suffice to observe that changes in the attitudes of religious organizations in Nigeria have played a major role in the democratic transition process. They have also influenced the ethical and political climate by justifying tolerance or intolerance, environmentalism or political and economic democratization understanding religions

in Nigeria and their influence on the political landscape and culture are important in comprehending the peoples' mind-set and the their democratization process.

As I have earlier observed, militancy and conflict destroys human dignity and the capacity for human relationship and development in the Niger Delta. The conflict affects not only to political instability of the region, but in turn deters development. For instance, the providers of essential services in the region have fled the area, or avoid settling there out of fear of violence. The same applies to foreign investors.

In this section of my work, I wish to formulate an idea of how religious bodies in the Niger Delta can assist in building a society where all men and women in the region can dwell and a sustainable community that will accommodate all citizens.

Various religious groups in the region also form part of the community. All religious groups located in the Niger Delta, take part in the joys and sorrows of the community. So it is one of the prerogatives of the religious groups to cover not only the religious, but also the social, political and environmental horizons of life of the region, by bringing hope and love for the people. Attention to the authentic human experience in the region will go along way to further understand the problem of the region; and religion in the Niger Delta must not be limited to providing the citizens information about God, but also have to be the source of critical reflection on how the Niger Delta people live its life of faith in the areas of the environment, politics, economics and social life.¹⁹⁹

Another dimension in which religious groups in the Niger Delta have to come in is the horizon of the dignity of a human person. The destruction of the lives of defenceless citizens because they protested for their rights is not ethically right. So the terminology of the environment and sustainable development in the Niger Delta is now to appear in the official debates of churches and religious groups in the region with the aim of nation building and the development of human capacity in the region.

As a multi-cultural and religious nation with many and diverse ethnic-nationalities and with Islam and Christianity as the two major religions,²⁰⁰ the task of building a

¹⁹⁹ Lennan, R. Introduction to Catholic Theology, New York, 1997, p.113.

²⁰⁰ Wer immer sich im nigerianischen Umfeld bewegt, gleich wo, sieht, hört und spürt die Hingabe der Nigerianer zu Gott, Allah oder den traditionellen Gottheiten. Gemeinsam mit Engeln, Dämonen und übernatürlichen Mächten prägen und gestalten sie in den Vorstellungen der Gläubigen alle in unterschiedlichster

viable nation that could be real home to all members of its diverse component groups is the most challenging work for not only political leaders, but also religious leaders. One thing that has become increasingly evident in the Nigeria society is the fact that nation-building, especially on social issues, belongs to politics, and therefore to the State leadership. However, the Church (Catholic Church) and other churches as a community have also its own contribution to make about a just society in Nigeria.

5.3. The Church and the Niger Delta Conflict

The issue of sustainable development and human promotion which includes the respect for the dignity of the human person and defence of his fundamental rights as well as the fostering of authentic environmental values has become an enormous task in the Niger Delta. This entails seeing, judging and acting out in concrete way in the human social situation not only from the perspective of social ethics, but also from the Christian perspective. The challenges facing not only the political society but also the Church in the Niger Delta region are the challenges for peace and human capacity development.

The Niger Delta environmental conflict and how it hinders sustainable development in the region runs-through all my findings in the section of work. Through its teaching on social issues, the Church in Nigeria participates in the moral and social building of the Nigerian society. Peter Schneller for instance, made a collection and edition of the social teaching of the Church in Nigeria titled "The Voice of the Voiceless". His edited volume was only an anthology; and so he did not intend to analyze the teachings of the Church on social issues but rather to make available to the modern scholars the documents of Nigerian Bishops on social issues.²⁰¹ In the light of this, the Bishops noted that they share the joys and hopes, the fear and anxieties of the men and women of the region. They noted that the problem facing the region and many other parts of Nigeria are many and serious: unemployment, breakdown of

Form die politischen, kulturellen und sozioökonomischen Prozesse mit. So ist es für Müslime wie für Christen enorm wichtig, ihren praktizierten Glauben auch nach außen hin zu präsentieren. Das führt dazu, dass Religion eine öffentliche Sache wird und damit zugleich eine politische Dimension annimmt. Nichtreligiös zusein und religiösen Grundfesten zu rütteln, ist im Verständnis und Denken der Nigerianer schlechterdings. Cf. Bergstresser, H., Nigeria: Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea, Frankfurt a. Main, 2010, p.186.

²⁰¹ Odurukwe, J.N. The Bishops and Challenges of Human Promotion in Nigeria, Rome, 2009, p.13.

social services, militancy, hunger and malnutrition, despair and disorientation of the youth, misery and neglect of the aged, social and political insecurity, corruption and incompetence among the government officials and oil workers, etc. The Bishops added: the Church has a particular concern for the poor and suffering. It is the duty of the church to serve the suffering in the region. When brothers fights brothers inflicting dreadful suffering, the Church cannot disown them but must suffer inconsolably until they are reconciled.²⁰²

5.3.1. Areas of Concern by the Church

5.3.1.1. Human Empowerment and Poverty Reduction

To bring help to people in need is a holy command of all religions. And the Church in Nigeria urge everyone to accept this responsibility to continue, and if possible to increase their help to the victims of conflict in the Niger Delta.²⁰³ Hence, the Bishops addressed itself to the environmental problems and poverty crisis in the Niger Delta; for as they stated: “we noted with anxiety and concern that the Niger Delta region seems to be presently adrift in a sea of confusion. As a result of this, the urgent problems affecting the daily lives of citizens have been left unattended to. There is fear and despair in the air. The citizens cannot endure this situation for much longer.²⁰⁴ The quality of lives in the Niger Delta as they further observed is well below human dignity; since basic needs like food, shelter, health care and good education are getting more and more out of reach of the average citizen of the region.

The Bishops said, “We see this clearly in the wretched looks and hungry eyes of many who knock daily at our church doors. The unemployed youths in the Delta are losing hope in their future and are taking up arms, and this often bring down further the already low image of our country abroad. And all this is happening in a region so abundantly blessed by God.²⁰⁵ The issue of poverty in the Niger Delta as I have earlier observed cannot be removed from the activities of oil exploration and exploitation taking place in the region. Through these activities, the basic

²⁰² Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN): The Lord’s Year of Favour, Communiqué, Lagos, 2003.

²⁰³ Odurukwe, J.N. The Bishops and Challenges of Human Promotion in Nigeria, Rome, 2009, p.25.

²⁰⁴ CBCN: A Nation Adrift, Enugu, (27, July 1993).

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

occupations (farming and fishing) of the communities have been hindered. There are serious hardships in families. Their basic needs in food, clothing and housing are place out of reach. Distributive justice is not holding. The multinational oil companies and their cohorts in government grow rich, and their host communities, poorer. The inevitable results are despair, hopelessness, militancy, violence and anger. In this quagmire, sustainable development and human promotion are in jeopardy.

In view of the Delta region, the Nigerian Bishops have observed that the people are still in the throes of distress, helplessness and despair with the teeming youth population of the area unemployed, many of whom are faced with starvation and destitution of incredible magnitude.²⁰⁶ Also in the light of the foregoing, they further identified the degree of poverty in the Niger Delta to include those who lack, because of the degradation of the environment, adequate food, shelter clothing, medical attention, education or deprived of personal liberty or those whose rights are trampled upon.²⁰⁷

So the Bishops never denied the reality of poverty in the region aggravated by environmental degradation of the area. So this condition of poverty and powerlessness of the people of the Niger Delta in the face of the powerful multinational oil companies and few elites in government challenges the Church in Nigeria and the Bishops to concrete action of human promotion, sustainable development and commitment for the cause of the communities and villages of the Niger Delta.

5.3.1.2. Clean and Healthy Environment

The reckless exploitation and despoliation of vast tracts of the Niger Delta region is an injustice the Nigerian Bishops cannot easily ignore in tackling the problems facing the region. Pollution through oil spillage and industrial effluents has over the years devastated the vegetation, farmlands and fishing waters of the region. Thus the citizens who earn their living through farming or fishing are now reduced to crushing poverty and a life of undeserved hardship and misery. It must be observed that this

²⁰⁶ CBCN: Building God's Kingdom of Justice and Peace, Communiqué, Abuja, (5th- 10th, March, 2001).

²⁰⁷ Keynote on Organizational Structure of Justice and Peace in Nigeria: The Christian communities and their responsibilities in defence of human rights, Enugu, Feb.10th – 21st, 2006.

assault on the Niger Delta environment most often hurts the poor and the voiceless. The Nigerian Bishops never relented in addressing this issue and so they observed that. "Our responsibility to care for God's creation should make us have concern for the reckless pollution of the environment in the Niger Delta region;²⁰⁸ the periodic environmental degradation through burst oil pipelines, the devastation of the arable and habitable land through oil exploration and exploitation.

Following the idea of the Christian teaching on nature in relation with man, the Bishops also agree that man's domination over nature is not absolute. It is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; and so they advocate a religious respect of creation. They further said that God endowed the Niger Delta with a mild climate, rich vegetation, abundance source of water and oil. They further showed their regret on the environmental condition of the region which has been subjected to mindless abuse through oil spillage, resulting from careless explorations and exploitation of the region's oil reserves and depletion of forest resources. They sounded a note of warning that: if the situation is not redressed by means of clearly defined environmental policies that are rigorously enforced, the region may soon be faced with serious environmental disasters.²⁰⁹

They also stressed the fact that conflicts between stakeholders over resources rights and usage have become rampant and intensive throughout the Niger Delta. The most serious conflicts pitched local communities against oil companies. The general conclusion according to them is that oil companies are the major cause of environmental degradation, especially since oil activities are easily the most visible in terms of dramatic ecological impacts.²¹⁰ This reasoning appears logical since as many communities indicated that the high incidence of oil spillage in their various communities is mainly responsible for the significant downsizing trends in farm size and farm productivity. It is not surprising, therefore, that the oil pollution factor in the area ranked highest in the peoples perception as of the root causes of the decline of their occupational productivity, thereby affecting the development of the region.

So the environment and nature in general are only gifts to man and are gifts with accompanying responsibility. Each generation needs them for its existence and welfare. So they advised that the natural gifts in the Niger Delta are to be treasured,

²⁰⁸ Cf. Ugorji, L.I. Political and Social Ethics: Issues of the moment, Enugu, 2008, p.60.

²⁰⁹ CBCN: Building God's Kingdom of Justice and Peace, communiqué, Abuja, 5th- 10th, March, 2001.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

preserved and used with moderation. Using them as if they were inexhaustible with absolute dominion seriously endangers their availability and lives not only of the people of the region presently, but also of the generation to come.²¹¹ The Nigerian Bishops said that the true concept of economic development cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renew ability of resources and the consequence of haphazard oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta. The argument here is that the multinational oil companies should not try to exhaust the area at the expense of the people and their future generations. They all have the right to live in an environment that is intact and healthy, and to enjoy its resources too. An attempt they advised should be made to express this maxim through the principle of sustainability and the promotion of a sustainable future.²¹² By this principle, solidarity does not refer only to our co-operative attitude to fellow men and women of the present generation. It further places limits on all our use and management of available resources, and also embraces our responsibility towards future generations. The present generation should not try to live or exhaust natural resources and destroy the environment at the expense of the people of future generations. Future generations also have the right to live in an environment that is intact and healthy, and to enjoy its resources.

5.3.1.3. Human Rights

The Bishops in Nigeria also saw themselves as properly committed to advise and address the issue of rights of the human person in the Niger Delta. So the issue of human rights then constitutes an important task and challenge that is intimately linked with the Nigerian Bishops' social teaching on the Niger Delta conflict. Accordingly, they stated that "we single ²¹³out that the following human rights as being especially worthy of attention in the Niger Delta today: these rights include the right to all means necessary for leading a truly human life, such as food, clothing and shelter; the right to safe and healthy environment; the right to education; the right to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, and to activity in accordance with the upright norm of one's conscience."

²¹¹ CBCN: Co-responsibility in Nation Building, Communiqué, Lagos (April, 2003).

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

The concern on the human rights issue in the Niger Delta has been for many years the sight of major confrontations between the local people who live there and the Nigerian government security forces, resulting in extra judicial killings, arbitrary detentions, torture, rape and destruction of property.

In 1999 as I have noted earlier before, the Nigerian army wiped out the village of Odi in the Niger Delta region at the orders of the President, with the excuse that the villagers killed some policemen who were carrying out their legal duties.²¹⁴ Also many innocent citizens have been tortured and executed by private armies of prominent politicians, and by dubious vigilante groups who arrest suspects, interrogate them, try, convict and execute them in the most primitive and dastardly manner, with no reference to authority.²¹⁵ Under repressive military regimes in Nigeria, opposition suffered fatal wounds. Many outspoken social critics were jailed or forced into exile. The few dissenting voices that remained were daily haunted and harassed. The human rights campaigners and journalists who were critical of government policies in the Niger Delta got arrested and locked up now and again. A number of media houses were sometimes proscribed, their workers thrown out of job.

The poor people of the Niger Delta are often treated as non-persons or at best sub-persons by the government and the oil companies. Their fundamental human rights are trampled upon with reckless abandon. They often have no freedom even to complain about their condition.

The presence of oil companies in the Niger Delta also exacerbates communal tensions. The weakness of conflict resolution structures means that many disputes in the region are settled violently instead of through peaceful means. In Nigerian generally, the level of state corruption means that government positions are highly sought. In the Niger Delta, the stakes are higher, including even at the local government levels, because of the amount of money that flows to the region from the oil. So neighbouring communities clash over claim of ownership of areas where oil drilling takes place.

Governance and stable political process also seem to have been weakened by the presence of oil resources in the region. The fact I wish to stress here is that only

²¹⁴ Cf. also, Ehusani, G. A Prophetic Church, Ibadan, 2003, p.26.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

stable and mature democratic political institution can allow a fair distribution and utilization of oil revenues accruing from the Niger Delta. By this I mean a decent political democratic institution for the people of the region which is characterized by political stability and institutional accountability which encourages policy makers to think in the long term as good governance and sustainable development becomes central to competition for political power. Policy decisions have to be generally based on transparent information while property rights for the citizens are clearly defined. These features give citizens the opportunity to provide critical counterbalance to the influence of interests benefiting from government policies. Unfortunately, under the fractional democracy as we have it now in Nigeria, with extension to the Niger Delta, political parties are weak and are formed around ethnic charismatic leaders. Electoral institutions are fragile, political support derives from systems of patronage and ethnic divides. On the basis of this analysis, only a system of government which has the ability to reach consensus and allows for transparency in the Niger Delta, is capable of delivering on the human rights and also the benefits of oil wealth to the people.

Unfortunately, the common villagers and citizens of the region do not help in these aspects. Because of lack of proper education, citizens are so ignorant of their rights that they do not even know when it is denied or what to do if they are aware. And because people lack self-worth, they easily lend themselves to instruments of denying others their rights: armed robbery, kidnapping of oil workers and innocent citizens, militancy, oil theft and destruction of oil facilities, arson, assassinations, political thuggery etc.

Generally, the Church has been making claims of efforts to educate people of their rights and help them to claim them. But her efforts however remain largely on the level of admonitions. No serious or tangible action has yet to be claimed to have been taken. Put poignantly. "what is clear to many however is that the church's participation in social transformation in the Niger Delta has remained largely on the level of social analysis that is unaccompanied by social action, except of course that type of social action that is equivalent to providing succour to the oppressed while letting the oppressor go free to continue his or her exploits."²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Ehusani, G. Evangelization and the Socio-Economic circumstances of Africa- Paper presented at the 7th CIWA Theology Week, Port-Harcourt, March, 1996, p.19.

5.3.1.4. Education and Human Capacity Building

By human capacity building and education for the people of the Niger Delta of Nigeria, I mean assisting every citizen of the region in forming his own correct judgement and making decision for his own life. The Bishops noted with disappointment the current educational level of the region when they stated: "We note with anxiety and concern that the Niger Delta seems to be presently adrift in a sea of confusion. As a result, urgent problems affecting the daily lives of citizens have been left unattended to. There is generally disintegration of the educational system... there is fear and despair in the air. The region cannot endure this situation for much longer. We have for long seriously called to question the value of our present educational system and policies."²¹⁷ They further observed that the Niger Delta region "is still short of trained citizens for the civil services for commercial enterprises and for technical enterprises in the agricultural and oil industries. One fears that up to the present much of the educational system of the area has had an excessively literary bias... But we assure them that we will do our best to cooperate in funding technical and commercial schools and in training and finding staff for such schools."²¹⁸

One cannot deny the fact that for the achievement of sustainable development in the region, there must be no room for daydreaming and laziness. Education in the Niger Delta has to take the form of an investment on the citizens rather than on weapons and militarization. Here then education wears a very broad definition to mean the transfer and modification of knowledge, experience, skills and attitude. This is very important for the region since without proper education, rights and dignity of the citizens are at stake. Proper education can give the people of the region the opportunity to participate fully in the life of the modern civil and democratic society; and also prepare the youths of the region for greater responsibilities in the society.

The slow pace of human capacity development in the region which is necessitated by illiteracy gives rise to ignorance in the region. Ignorance is one of the greatest problems of proper human development and dialogue required to a democratic society in the Niger Delta. Since there is wide spread ignorance in the region, citizens easily fall pray to exploitation by gullible politicians. Ignorance hinders the

²¹⁷ CBCN: A Nation Adrift, Communiqué of Emergency, Enugu, (27th September, 1993).

²¹⁸ Ibid.

citizens from knowing their rights and freedoms. They are not properly informed about the laws that protect them, their environment nor where to seek redress when such rights are infringed. So for a sustainable development and political culture to thrive in the region, there is an urgent need for proper education which will eliminate not only political ignorance, and also empower the citizens with the ability to critically analyse the political, environmental and also the socio-political issues around them in a rational and independent manner. Finally, education is the most powerful weapon a citizen in the Niger Delta can wield in a democratic society and for self empowerment, self-actualization and for sustainable development.

The kind of education envisaged here is one which must modify and equip the citizens not only with literary knowledge, but also with new experience, skills and attitude. I have to point out that one of the basic problems of education in the area is the total failure of technical and industrial education. In line with this the Bishops affirms that education must give a man or woman in the Niger Delta the possibility to participate fully in the life of the society in the modern world. It should also be offered to in such a way that citizens are being prepared for greater responsibilities. A nation which neglects this aspect of its education programme spoils its youth, undermines its future and development and calls for disaster.²¹⁹

So the church as a promoter of human rights in the Niger Delta should continue to look at the future of the region with optimism for human capacity building. She must also maintain keep a lead and double her effort in the educational system in the region. The educational development from the grass-root will bring about development and peace in the area.

The Bishops also showed their concern on the issue of providing salaries and benefits to all teachers and education administrators that will reflect the principles of economic justice, as well as providing the resources necessary for teachers to be academically and personally prepared for the critical tasks they face in the region. They believe that as a matter of justice to the region, “when services aimed at improving the educational environment-especially for those most at risk in the Niger Delta- are available to students and teachers in public schools, these services

²¹⁹ CBCN: Joint Pastoral Letter, Nigerian Elections 1983, Lagos, (February, 1983).

should be available to students and teachers in other non-formal educational sectors as well.”²²⁰

5.3.1.5. Promotion of Justice

It a wonderful development that the Bishops did recognize the structures of injustice in the Nigerian society by pointing out a network of domination, oppression and abuse built around the government that stifle freedom and keep the greater part of the citizens especially from the Niger Delta from sharing the dividends of the gifts of nature inherent in their environment. In the light of this, they opined that: “justice must govern our relations to our fellow citizens, and the relations between the government and the subjects. Each citizen must give to his fellow citizen what is due to him; he must seek from him only what he can demand as a right. The state through its officers distributes the wealth of the Nigerian nation and the benefits as its command, according to its laws and regulations.”²²¹

On the account of this, I think the Bishops did not intend to establish a general theory, but they are concerned with the specific reality of marginalization and oppressed peoples in the Niger Delta. They further stated that “we must insist that the nation will grow in overcoming difficulties and in resolving problems. In all, our country has many resources and so we call upon our people: a people who possesses a passionate sense of justice that will not suffer for any long time gross or glaring inequalities in the sharing-out of the country’s wealth; who will allow no system of state totalitarianism to take root because it is contrary to those traditions that in times past compelled chiefs to heed to the advice of the community; who desire intensively to make progress and who consequently will not go on accepting the rule of any government that is not clearly on the side of progress.”²²² Hence, they see the importance of justice in the reconstruction of the Niger Delta’s social, political and economic problems for sustainable development.

One area of injustice according to the Bishops that cannot be easily ignored is the “mindless exploitation and despoliation of vast tracts of oil-producing land in the

²²⁰ Ugorji, L.I. Political and Social Ethics: Issues of the Moment, Enugu, 2008, p.134.

²²¹ CBCN: Healing the Nation, Communiqué, Lagos, (27th February, 1996).

²²² CBCN: Seeking the way of Peace, Communiqué, Abuja, (10th-14th March, 2003).

Niger Delta region.”²²³ Continuing they agreed that “pollution has devastated the vegetation, farmlands and fishing waters in the region. Thus majority of the people of the area who earned their living through farming or fishing have no more source of livelihood. Despite the fact that the area is the goose that lays the golden egg, it has not benefited much from the oil revenue. In the area, this has resulted in the restiveness of youths, who are up in arms to demand for justice and equity.”²²⁴

The Bishops also agreed that peace in the Niger Delta is also threatened by the social injustices, political instability, and lack of national cohesion, internal insecurity in the region. Peace is rightly and appropriately a necessary enterprise of justice for the region, and can only be actualized when the government and the citizens strives for it. So because of the violent history of the region, justice and peace forms an integral aspect of sustainable development of the region.

5.4. Factors that may shape the Future

The prospect of realising human and environmental rights in the Niger Delta region is will neither be finished nor will it be perfect. While authoritarianism remains the policy of the Nigerian government on the region, poor environmental governance is still a major issue coupled with other contending social forces which are also riddled with their own contradictions.

It may be pertinent to observe that it may be practically impossible (if not dangerous) for a social scientist to predict accurately what the future of the Niger Delta. This I can say may not be unrelated with the social and political events and conditions of the region which are usually marked by such a high degree of volatility and uncertainty that predictions cannot be made with any degree of accuracy. This is even more so in making prognosis about dynamic events such as those occurring on daily basis in the crisis ridden environment of the Niger Delta region. Indeed, as I have tried in this study to demonstrate all along, part of the major challenges arising from any in-depth empirical investigation of the Niger Delta crisis (not to talk of making predictions for the future) is that the events in the region not only happens o fast, but are also constantly influenced by a multiplicity of factors which require that

²²³ Ugorji, L.I. Political and Social Ethics: Issues of the Moment, Enugu, 2008, p.110.

²²⁴ Ibid.

assumptions must be revisited and adjusted constantly to accommodate the new developments.

At a general level, therefore, there are fears about the future prospects of the Niger Delta giving the far-reaching environmental, political, economic, social and security implications of the increasingly violent conflicts in the oil rich region. On one hand is the fear that given the dangerous kinds of social crisis that is taking place in the region, the Niger Delta would likely end up as an embarrassing disaster for the entire country if genuine efforts were not made to stem the present tide of decay and collapse.

Nevertheless, a few predictions can be made based on the informed and existing knowledge, as well as sustained and deep interest on the Niger Delta. The first theory is that there may not be in the near future the conditions or circumstances precipitating violent conflicts in the region to change significantly. This is so predicted while the major stakeholders in the region's local communities vis-à-vis multinational oil communities and the Nigerian state- have boxed themselves into a position that can only allow each of them limited leverage for reconciliation.²²⁵ Among the local communities, in their fight for environmental rights the personalisation of power in the social movements, coupled with weak organisational structures at the grassroots have provoked destructive tensions and divisions within leadership. In some cases, principles of internal democracy, tolerance, accountability and clear vision of goals that are lacking among the local communities have negatively affected the success of moving their environmental and rights struggle forward. While the local communities continue to demand that multinational oil companies reduced the extent of environmental degradation and add value to their business and operational activities by investing more in community development initiatives based on the priorities set by host communities themselves, the oil companies on the other hand insists on not taking up social and environmental responsibilities that are strictly those of the government. The government on its part has continued to insist that it cannot redirect all resources on the Niger Delta issue in the light of other competing needs if it is to achieve a balanced development throughout the country. In the light of these divergent perspectives, one cannot rule out the theory that competition and conflicts are likely

²²⁵ Ukeje, C.U. *Oil Capital, Ethnic Nationalism and Civil Conflict in the Niger Delta of Nigeria*, Port-Harcourt, 2004, p.332.

to continue as the different groups lock horns to challenge and gain advantages over the other.

In the light of the above theory, there are certainly no hard and fast rules about the best options for addressing the environmental and development problems facing the Niger Delta. Perhaps, the first thing to do is to take sincere steps to expand the space for popular and democratic participation by all stakeholders in the region. As I have earlier observed, the current practice of democratic governance in the Nigerian society, at some areas still falls short of the ideal. For the common citizens in the region, the expected dividend of democracy can only begin when a genuine and transparent efforts are made to accept and treat them as “partners in progress” and by allowing them to play leading role in identifying and implementing their own developmental priorities.²²⁶

5.4.1. Demilitarization and the End of Arms Conflicts in the Region

The case that might help to escalate the Niger Delta problem in the future is the willingness of the Nigerian state to continue to use police and military forces against the local communities whom they believe to be breaching the peace as defined by the government. In order to secure its increasingly threatened accumulative base, government is more and more engaging the local Niger Delta communities violently.

“Martialisches Aktionen wie Operation Restore Hope, Operation Flush Out, Operation Locust Feast oder Operation Moses schlugen blutige Schneisen im Delta und verbreiteten im Öl- und Gasfördergebiet Tod, Elend, Hoffnungslosigkeit und verbrannte Erde. Der soziale Dampfkessel, dessen Ventil dem Kesseldruck nicht mehr standhielt, explodierte, und der aufgestaute Hass, den die Repression der Militärdiktatur bis 1988/99 erzeugt hatte, entfesselte eine zerstörerische Kraft, die der nun demokratisch verfasste Staat nicht mehr kontrollieren, geschweige beherrschen konnte. Niemand weiß auch nur annähernd, wie viel Menschenleben die Gewaltorgien und organisierten Verbrechen bislang gekostet haben.“²²⁷

The response of the government (to crush community protests) in the wake of the decade long upsurge in the agitations by the Niger Delta peoples was to ensure the

²²⁶ Cf. Okonta, I., & Douglas, O. *Where the Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights and Oil*, London, 2003, p.83.

²²⁷ Bergstresser, H. *Nigeria, Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea*, Frankfurt am. Main, 2010, p.39.

protection of oil facilities and the continued flow of the crude oil. An important observation is that the Nigeria Delta remains the most militarized region in Nigeria with virtually every area covered by the police, army, naval and secret service personnel, as well as permanent police/military posts and garrisons.²²⁸ This is contrary to the principles of increasing the wellbeing of the citizens of the Niger Delta and avoidance of adverse impacts. But socially, there is no doubt that the day-to-day activities of the security personnel stationed in the region continue to be a major source of irritation for the citizens as they constitute themselves into a sort of army of occupation; extorting, harassing and intimidating innocent citizens.

In such an unstable milieu, violence becomes both inevitable and inimical to peace, stability and sustainable development. However, what appears not understood and appreciated by government is that on every occasion that it authorises the brutal suppression of restive communities, it is also communicating a loss of initiative and capacity to extract obedience through non-violent means. This tends to create an ethical and authority crises for government in the eyes of the citizens.

Unfortunately, government can no longer lay effective claims to a monopoly of power of coercion in the region given the fact that many communities have themselves illegally acquired sophisticated weapons that sometimes overwhelm those owned by government. Increasingly, there is a fearful concern about the widespread availability and indiscriminate use of weapons and ammunitions by militant communities, cult groups, hoodlums and criminal gangsters. With such weapons, the propensity to use brute force to settle even the most basic disagreements (rather than taking recourse to civilised dialogue) is significantly enhanced.

Expectedly, there is virtually no part of the Niger Delta where clashes between state security personnel and local communities have not occurred in the last decade. However, such encounters and crucial challenges could in the long run lead to major conflagrations of what would hurt peace and stability in the region in particular, and to other parts of the West African sub-region in general.

²²⁸ Okonta, I, & Douglas. O. 2003, p.58.

5.4.2. Population and Social Factors

Generally speaking, the population density in Nigeria is quite high, but unfortunately, the population density in the Niger Delta region is even above average when compared with other parts of Nigeria; and the population is persistently increasing.²²⁹ So the high population density cannot be denied as a factor that will shape the situation in the Niger Delta for the future. The persistently increasing population is causing a great scarcity of land and this is fuelling internal conflict since the region is also ethnically fragmented. The land absorbed by the increasing population and often uncontrolled slums in the region make severe impact on the very delicate environment. The loss of land needed for farming and fishing and wood-lands is a critical issue.

Another point that may shape the future social structure of the Niger Delta region is the loss of influence of village heads and traditional social structures. In the recent decades, the social and political authority of traditional rulers has significantly declined. The veracity of this hinges on the fact that the dynamism of the Niger Delta society is moving faster than many of the traditional institutions can cope. The changing patterns of the society worldwide in the course of modernization and globalization also affected the Niger Delta society. Indicators that more changes will occur is the rise in literacy rates, the rise in urban living, the growth of industries, and advancement in communication and media infrastructure, among others. Increased literacy resulting from changed educational patterns in the Niger Delta has a lot to do with the future social change of the region. The exposure of the citizens to science and technology is often in conflict with the traditional ones. This is particularly true of the youth population.²³⁰ In the Niger Delta, it is almost a sociological commonplace that adolescents and adults are among the people most deeply affected by the rapid events and social change because they are aware simultaneously of the past and the new opportunities becoming available or being denied them in the region. The consequence has been a change in the principal actors of resistance and struggle in the Niger Delta, who are now younger, mostly male actors. They are generally more prone to violence, especially given the high level of unemployment in the Delta and

²²⁹ Cf. United Nation Development Programme (UNDP): Niger Delta Human Development Report, 2006, p.24.

²³⁰ Obi, C. Youth and Generational Dimensions to Struggle for resource Control in the Niger Delta, Dakar, 2006, p.19.

the fact that without the social support of traditional family structures the young people are hit harder by the endemic unemployment.

5.4.3. Efficient and Legitimate Political Institutions

As I have earlier observed in this research work, the Nigerian nation is not only ethically and religiously fragmented but is also marked by the fragmentation of its political structure, sometimes which results in the persistent weakness of the political institutions and a lack of central coordination. The weak political institutions, which undermined the effectiveness of the political output and reduced the state's capacity to provide internal stability still remains unsustainable and problematic in the Niger Delta region.

Moreover, political institutions were further destroyed and de-legitimized by successive military regimes which reinforced paternalistic patterns of political rule. This means that the military dictators used the oil rents to co-opt the traditional rulers of the country in order to bolster their political legitimacy, thereby fostering a culture of rent seeking and endemic corruption.²³¹ Despite the institutional weakness, violent state repression under the military rule was obviously one of the factors limiting the occurrence of more violent protests and broader social conflicts in the Niger Delta.

But with the return to democracy, especially in the context of elections, politicians began on a large scale to recruit mostly unemployed young men in the Niger Delta. They provided them with weapons to protect themselves, to fight political opponents and to intimidate potential voters to vote for the "right" candidate. The weapons allocated have for the most part never been re-collected, meaning that there are considerable number of well-armed, disillusioned young people, many whom were "dismissed" after the elections as the politicians no longer had any use for them. For example, the powerful militant leaders Ateke Tom (head of the Niger Delta Vigilante) and Alhaji Asari Dokubo (head of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force) were

²³¹ Mähler, A. Nigeria: A Prime Example of resource Curse? Revisiting the Oil-Violence Link in the Niger Delta, Hamburg, 2010, No.120, p.23 (Annegret Mähler is a political scientist and research fellow at German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) and also an expert on the Niger Delta).

“actively deployed and paid by high ranking politicians to be political thugs during elections.”²³²

Second, the way of strengthening political links with the people and the government through a constructive peaceful resolution will equally shape the future of the region. At the moment, the zoning of Nigerian political powers has not yet reflected the spirit of nationalism among the citizens in the region. Political power should not be a prerogative of a particular ethnic group or geo-political zone. Proper political system may help to return confidence to the people of the region and so shape the future of the area.

In summary, the failure of the democratic political institutions can be considered one of the basic contextual conditions providing the opportunity for the increase in and especially the enduring continuity of violence in the Niger Delta.

5.4.4. Comprehensive Development

A comprehensive development that is also sustainable for the people of the Niger Delta will still remain one of the greatest ethical challenges facing the Nigerian government and the oil companies in many years to come. By this I mean that the Nigerian government despite her repressive approach to the unrest and conflicts in the region is bound by justice to pay adequate compensations to the citizens of the Niger Delta, as a way of putting to an end the perennial unrest in the region. Adequate compensation (in terms of developmental projects) can be a panacea for peace in the region. Generally, the associated conflicts and grievances in the region represent a permanent source of general discontent and mistrust on the part of the Niger Delta's population towards the government; this discontent is mostly likely continuing to grow due to unfulfilled promises of compensation.

In the 1970s the increasing oil revenues from the Niger Delta were at least partly used for industrialization projects and the expansion.²³³ However, as the industrialization projects were capital intensive and poorly designed, they hardly had any sustainable development effects and did not lead to the successful

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Bergstresser, H. Nigeria, in: Nohlen, D., & Nuscheler, F., (eds.): Handbuch der Dritten Welt, Vol. IV: Westafrika und Zentralafrika, 1993, pp.344-363.

diversification of the economy.²³⁴ Large amounts of oil revenue were squandered for unproductive projects, or projects were simply designed to dispense large amounts of money to certain privileged groups. The increasingly inefficient squandering of resources was accompanied by growing indebtedness, which becomes a serious problem in the context of increase in the international interest rate and the severe drop in the global oil prices. Nigeria experienced a severe economic crisis. There was a rapid increase in the cost of living which severely affected especially the lower and the middle classes. At the same time, a gradual deterioration of Nigeria's social infrastructure began, with public amenities becoming increasingly under equipped. Poverty and underdevelopment had been prevalent in the Niger Delta, but it increased drastically in the context of the structural policy reforms all of which were related to the ineffective and unsustainable resource management. The picture of the developmental level of the Delta can be summarised thus:

„Am Ressourcenreichtum des Niger-Deltas laben sich die nigerianischen Eliten und des Öl-Multis, während Steinzeit und Moderne hier ganz dicht beieinander liegen: Hochkomplexe Petrochemie neben ärmlichen Lehmhütten, zumeist oberirdisch verlegte Pipelines durchqueren Weiler und Dörfer, verlaufen häufig direkt vor den Eingängen der strohbedeckten Behausungen. Elektrizität ist hier seit jeher ein Fremdwort, denn den Strom für die Industrieanlagen und die zahllosen Pumpstationen liefern Dieselgeneratoren, die Tag und Nacht dröhnen und den Lärmterror der Abfacklungsanlagen noch steigern.“²³⁵

With the return of democracy in 1999, the Nigerian government established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to explore the prospect of development that will be sustainable for the region; but unfortunately, this commission has yet to become fully operational owing to bureaucratic and ethnic huddles. It needs to be effectively functional if the attainment of social harmony and peace is desirable for the future. This Commission is to carry the onerous task of ensuring that citizens of the region receive their fair share of revenues (from their environment) through sustainable development projects. The NDDC needs to provide the angry youths with employment opportunities and encourage them to decommission their weapons for jobs. The commission also needs to work to build better communities by joining efforts with communities, women, men and youths.

Also the return of democracy has re-introduced the legislative arm of government as a key stakeholder. There are several committees of the legislatures at the federal

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Cf. Bergstresser, H. Nigeria, Macht und Ohnmacht am Golf von Guinea, Frankfurt a. Main, 2010, p.26.

and state levels with responsibilities relating to the oil industry and the Niger Delta. It is critical that these and the Judiciary stand firm on the Rule of Law if the crisis in the region is to be checked in the near future.

5.4.5. Abuse of Power and Sub-State Actors

The political consequence of the phenomenal growth of the oil industry in the Niger Delta manifested in the shifting of emphasis from regional or (now state) or grass-root governments to the federal government and the ensuing zero-sum, winner-takes-all contests for the political control of the centre.²³⁶ Much of the 'jumbo earnings' from oil however created a false sense of security and a grand illusion among policy makers that they could secure the Nigerian sustainable development with absolute certainty. Such illusions of grandeur led successive governments into wasteful expenditures and other ambitious indulgences that served little more often than Nigeria's often overrated ego as the giant of Africa.²³⁷ Furthermore, the lack of democratic leadership which is widespread in Nigeria is evident in the widespread tendency of elites to use public offices and political power to pursue private interests. With the transition to democracy this cupidity has become more publicly evident and it is therefore increasingly causing anger within the citizenry. Among the militant groups as well as the citizens of the region in the course of recent years, a generally growing frustration with the absence of any improvement can be asserted. Especially for the young people in the region, they have come to believe that peaceful protests do not produce any positive results. As the transition to democracy which the citizens associated with a lot of expectations and hope for improvement of the social, political and economic situation of the region has been largely disappointing, the people's willingness to use violent has been further strengthened.

It is unfortunate to note that rather than creating a basis for genuine and balanced development and improve the welfare of the people, oil blurred the vision of the Nigerian elites and prevented them from coming to terms with the structural defects

²³⁶ Ukeje, C. Oil Capital, Ethnic Nationalism and Civil Conflicts in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, Ile-Ife, 2004, pp.337-338.

²³⁷ Soyinka, W. The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis, New York, 1996, p.12.

and contradictions that the Nigerian nation represented, and deeply engendered poverty for the people mainly in the Niger Delta, amidst plenty in the region.

Due at least partly to the general weakness of political institutions, informal arrangements and particularly sub-state actors otherwise known as 'political god-fathers' (in Nigerian political parlance) have always been of high importance in the Nigerian politics. Particularly, the increase of violence and civil unrests in the Niger Delta can be attributed to the influence of the so-called 'god-fathers'. In Nigeria, 'god-fathers' are not democratically legitimate, but in practice they exercise a great and crucial political influence because they are wealthy and socially powerful. They often present or support candidates for political offices, and frequently make use of violence²³⁸, and in return they demand to control political decisions and to receive personal benefits or political protection for their illegal activities, among other things oil theft and embezzlement of public funds. 'God-fatherism' can be considered to be "both a symptom and a cause of the violence and corruption that together permeate the political process in Nigeria" and particularly in the Niger Delta.²³⁹ Within this unethical political vicious circle, godfatherism further reduces the legitimacy of government and perpetuates the political culture of irresponsible leadership in the Niger Delta.

Another failure the democratic political institutions that may affect the future of the region is the absence of a viable system of political parties. In Nigeria, unfortunately the unambiguous dominant political party is the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), which hardly has a clear ideological concept;²⁴⁰ but rather facilitates corruption and patronage networks of the god-fathers. As the PDP controls the machinery of state, it has access to large state funds, which are used to 'buy' political loyalty and to mobilize violence in the Niger Delta to enforce loyalty. This is not only undermining the democratic legitimacy of the Nigerian political actors but

²³⁸ Nigerian political God-fathers often do manipulate elections by contracting armed gangs to rig the election in favour of their candidates.

²³⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Chop Fine: The Human Rights Impact of Local Government Corruption and Mismanagement in Rivers State, Nigeria*, New York, January, 2007, p.34.

²⁴⁰ Nwankwo, B. *Institutional design and functionality of African democracies: A Comparative Analysis of Nigerian and Uganda*, Berlin, 2003, p.138.

also directly contributing to the daily increase of violence in the oil producing Niger Delta region; and may affect the early attainment of peace among the people.²⁴¹

5.4.6. Arms Proliferations

The increased supply of potentially militant actors with weapons is one of the crucial issues that will shape the future of the crisis and violent struggle in the Niger delta. In the region, the circulation of weapons is not just caused only by the corrupt and greedy politicians and security forces that employ them to carry out criminal acts such as elections rigging and oil bunkering; it also has international dimensions. It is a general knowledge that there are great proliferations of weapons in the Niger Delta- majority of them are unlicensed and therefore illegal.²⁴² In many communities and villages of the region, community armories now appear to be a common phenomenon in the Delta.²⁴³

In some cases, the presence of these weapons can be traced back to the Nigerian-Biafran war (1967-70); others can be said to be imported more recently. The main external sources are said to be neighbouring countries (such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Niger, Togo, Benin, Cameroon etc), many of which have experienced violent conflicts.²⁴⁴ The weapons used by militants and criminals in the Niger Delta are brought into the country by Nigerians or foreign arms dealers through the country's very vast and porous borders. Particularly important entry points appear to be the borders with Togo and Benin.²⁴⁵ In the Niger Delta, the weapons are sold directly to the militant groups, some political actors and some business people who pass them on to their end users. Weapons also enter into the Niger Delta region, although to a lesser extent, with Nigerian Soldiers returning from Peace missions in Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast.

²⁴¹ Zusätzlich blockierten die üblichen strukturellen Probleme Nigerias und des Niger-Deltas wie endemische Korruption und Inkompetenz in den Bundesstaaten und Bezirken jede systematische Herangehensweise, die zumindest ein Mindestmaß an Vertrauen in die Projekte hätte schaffen können.

²⁴² Cf. Hazen, J.M. & Horner, J., Small arms, armed violence and insecurity in Nigeria: the Niger Delta in perspective, Small Arms Survey, (Occasional Paper) Gent, No.20, December, 2007, p.91.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Human Rights Watch, 2003, p.25.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Hazen & Horner, 2007, p.91.

In summary, it can be concluded that the Niger Delta contextual conditions and other associated mechanisms have been detected which may escalate the crisis and violence in the region, independently of the effect of the oil on the environment. While these non-resource or 'non-environmental' factors had already reacted with each other before the issue of environmental conflict and had then reinforced the probability of violent conflict, they have since interacted with the factor of the environment in such a way that the environmental problems has explicitly served as an additional conflict triggering factor.

However, oil in the region will for a long time continue to serve as a conflict-triggering factor because it has been a motive for grievance-related crisis, as the people of the Niger Delta has felt that it is deprived of the financial benefits of the resource revenues while it also suffers the disastrous environmental and social impacts of oil production. This factor will principally continue to finance the militants groups in the region.

Consequently, while the grievances of the local communities' remains widely unchanged for the majority in the Niger Delta, this motive has recently been increasingly overtaken by the dynamic of violence which is fuelled by the illegal oil trade in the area and also by kidnapping of oil workers and innocent citizens for ransom.

5.5. General Conclusion and Critical Evaluation

So far in this my work I have chiefly analysed the effects of environmental problems to the key factor of sustainable development of the people of the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria. I have also painstakingly explored the conflict and the restiveness in the region which is mainly consequence of petroleum exploration and its ancillary problems of oil spillage within the environment. My research on the area, however, does not pale into insignificance nor preclude or diminish the importance of other social and environmental issues facing Nigerian as nation, when pitched against the backdrop of oil exploration and the unintended consequences of spillage that have largely become a cog in the wheel of the sustainable development.

From the foregoing, I did make it clear that the crisis of the environmental governance is a complex one. It is partly the result of the failure of the Nigerian state to effectively manage the oil-rich environment, and partly the inability of the state to mediate the social contradictions spawned by oil capital in the region to protect human and environmental rights. In a fundamental sense, the manner the Nigerian government had suppressed the rights movement in the oil-rich Delta area, in spite of the glaring environmental neglect, inequalities and ethical atrocities committed against the people fuelled the struggles of the citizens of the region against the multinational oil cartel.

Without any doubt, adjustments in political, social and economic policies played prominent roles in both excluding environmental concerns and considerations from the project of Nigerian developmental reform and worsening poverty and thereby engendering widespread sustainable development of the region. Rather than resolve these problems, I noted that the Nigerian state, captured by a political class of military and undemocratic elements, resorted to extreme repressive measures against the social forces that were challenging its claim to exclusive control and appropriation of the oil rich environment. I also noted that neither the forces of local resistance nor the oil companies-state coalition could win a decisive victory. Even if the multinational oil companies/the Nigerian state alliance has the 'upper hand', it has been unable to stem the revolutionary pressures emanating from the Delta communities. It has rather intensified and broadened the scope of their struggle. Accordingly, the ethical line between the struggle for political, human and environmental rights has become blurred. More civil rights and militant have emerged along the lines in the Niger Delta.

I also observed with concern that while the forces in the oil industry in the Delta area continue with 'business as usual' kind of mentality; there intensity of the conflict there could explode into a full-blown war for self-determination. It is therefore pertinent to suggest and elaborate fully certain points and measures; coupled with the ones I have also earlier suggested, that may provide an exit point out of the current crisis. The measures I do propose in this work will not solve all the problems of the region at once, but as the case may be, for calming the anger and indignation in the region, promoting good governance, creating sustainable livelihoods, reducing

environmental degradation and ensuring ethical, social and economic justice and also reducing the marginalization and social seclusion of the people of the region.

In the short to medium term, there is the need for the reform of Nigeria's institutional and legal framework especially as it concerns the citizens to ensure equitable and sustainable environmental management. In my opinion, the overhaul and strengthening of these existing framework should be based first of on genuine democratic principles, the protection of human and environmental rights of citizens of the region, and the implementation of new environmental guidelines. It will also be pertinent for policy makers to shift away from the 'top-bottom', capital-intensive and authoritarian approaches which equate development only with modernisation.

From Old to New Approach -for Environmental Sustainability in the Niger Delta:

Like a living or moving organism, every functioning society inevitably changes as long as it continues to exist and function. In other words, change is an inherent property of the society. The Niger Delta region exists in the milieu of a multitude of other changing systems and events; and unfortunately development choices before now have failed to galvanize the citizens and the region into optimally productive activities. There have not been a long term opportunities for the citizens and their communities to positively explore, expand and display their skills and potentials. Unfortunately, I have to note in this research work that the strategies of the past being employed by the government and the stakeholders in the region have failed to save the environment from exploitation and degradation; the old approach has also failed to implant good democratic principles and political development; educate the children and youths of the region; produce a conducive environment for investment, peace and social stability; save the people of the region from poor health and good sanitary behaviour; and even organise developmental activities that will be sustainable.

I envisage that this new approach will over the long term transform the Niger Delta region into a place that is environmentally friendly and regenerative; politically peaceful; socially and economically prosperous. This simple proposal may ensure a

development that is just, stable, equitable and sustainable for the citizens and the area.

Furthermore, to achieve this new approach to the environment and sustainable development in the region, some track procedures are required. Firstly, priority projects and quick interventions, including those that build confidence in the possibilities ahead, should be identified in the region. Through the exploration of the social realities of the citizens and the region, stakeholders and policy makers will be able to identify problems of the region and arrange them in the order of priority. For the problems of the Niger Delta to be manageable, its nature, the scope, the causes, the symptoms and the consequences have to be known not removing the relevant realities and social history of the people. Secondly, there is also the need to plan at a more strategic level and implement not only short and medium term programmes but also long-term programmes that will address the fundamental structural and environmental constraints on human development. It also entails the pursuit of an objective and specific principle for the Niger Delta. A broad goal or policy statement before now may have been made concerning the sustainable development of the region, but this new approach will entail a new objective which will specify the clientele, the change that is to be made at the region, at what level, within what specific time, and equally identifying what groups in the Niger Delta society will be involved to achieve a specific goal. This new approach in the Niger Delta has to be operational, since practical steps have to be taken on identifying the objective and specific steps and carrying those objectives to a logical end. The new approach that will enhance the environment and sustainable development in the Niger Delta has to move away from the old approach of general principles into a new idea of specific goals and programmes if the region is to move forward.

By contrast, citizens of the region have a very low image of the government and the oil companies in the region, and so this underscores the need to kick-start a new development agenda that will rejuvenate interest, loyalty and trust. This new approach to development has to involve the cooperation of all stakeholders in the Niger Delta, and create opportunities for partnerships. As an integrated system of development that will be sustainable, this approach will take some time, some effort, good will and consistency on the part of the Nigerian policy and decision makers in order to produce tangible results. The goal and success will be the easing of tension,

mutual suspicion, and recrimination of the region, renewed political will and vigour among the citizens and the readiness of all stakeholders to participate in advancing this new cause. This new approach for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta may also assist in addressing the structural, political, and infrastructural problems on human capacity development.

This new approach or proposals for sustainable development may include the followings:

Creating an agenda for peace building:

Creating an agenda for peace building:

Suffice to say that in every process of social interactions, people are often guided by the way they perceive life, other persons or groups, and the environment and situation around them. The result is a mutual manifestation of expected or unexpected behavioural attitudes or reactions, on the part of the parties in disagreement, towards the given situation. By extension this result leads to polarisation between the parties as each party tries to use whatever means at its disposal, including violence or force, to outwit and extract some advantages over the other.²⁴⁶ Given that conflict is natural wherever human beings exists and still more given the social and political terrain of the Niger Delta which I have earlier now portrayed, it is only right to recognise that conflict in the Niger Delta can be totally or completely eliminated from this region. Hence it is better and more realistic, perhaps, to talk of conflict management in the Niger Delta than to have the utopian belief that my proposals for peace can rid the region completely of conflict. Suffice to state that it is just a known fact that the cost of the continuation of conflicts in the region is to the detriment of the common good to bail the region and her citizens out of its economic, environmental and socio-political instability and malaise. All violent conflicts- relating to hostage-taking, blowing of pipelines, the occupation of oil companies and their flow stations by militant youths, confrontation of the oil companies etc., have constrained development efforts of the region; since development cannot proceed in the Niger Delta where militancy and conflict are the order of the day.

²⁴⁶ Enwerem, I. The Church and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria, in: Uzukwu, E., (ed.), Theology, Conflict and Reconciliation, (Vol. II), Enugu, 1999, p.36.

An ideal scenario of peace is captured by the United Nations Development Programme Report on the Niger Delta thus: “On the positive side, peace signifies a condition of good management, orderly resolution of conflict, harmony associated with mature relationships, gentleness, and love. On the negative side, it is conceived as the absence of something- the absence of turmoil, tension, conflict and war.”²⁴⁷

Peace building in the Niger Delta like any other society is a continuous process. But a renewed approach and urgency is required given the frequency and seriousness of social, environmental and political conflicts arising from the region. The absence of peace or the accelerating tempo of conflicts has huge cost on social and political development and the reversal of human development capacity.

Some important ingredients that must be central towards achieving peace in the Niger Delta (as I have in the course of this research noted) are the rule of law, cheap and easy access to justice and effective law enforcement. Unfortunately, many communities of the Niger Delta are not effectively and sufficiently policed, and so breaches of the law and some anti-social behaviour cannot be checked at the earlier stages. This only encourages unethical means of problems solving when citizens are aggrieved. Furthermore, the issue of exorbitant litigation and the lack of understanding of applicable laws also lead to slow judicial processes.

As an alternative, since the Niger Delta region is not homogeneous, traditional African conflict resolution mechanisms which lay great emphasis on the need to promote reconciliation and continued fraternity between parties can be of immense help. In this mechanism, judges conceive their tasks more to be not only detecting who is wrong and who is right, but the readjustment of the generally disturbed social relationships, so that these may be saved and persist. The judges have to give a judgment on the matter in dispute, but they also, if possible, to reconcile the parties, while maintaining the general principles of law.²⁴⁸

So the urgency of peace to the environmental and sustainable development of the region generally and to poverty eradication specifically is so fundamental that all necessary efforts should be put in to ensure that concrete progress is made in a relatively short time. One requirement for the solutions to the political, social, environmental and economic conflicts in the Niger Delta lies in the commitment to

²⁴⁷ United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP): Niger Delta Development Report, 2007, p.149.

²⁴⁸ Eboh, S.O. Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa, Enugu, 2003, p.106.

good governance and human rights. Citizens cannot achieve peace where the feeling of corrupt leadership, social exclusion, marginalisation and other forms of injustice hover around them.

Genuine Democracy and Accountability:

The relationship between governance to human development in the Niger Delta cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, many citizens have a very poor knowledge of democratic processes and how it affects their lives and future. This lack of poor knowledge excludes them from making their input as far as governance is concerned; this also leads to non-accountability and corruption at all levels of government and even local communities.

For too long in the Delta, both the military and civilian leadership exploited this poor democratic knowledge of the citizens and hid under that guise, and did not exhibit strong and focused leadership. Both military and civilian leadership pursued their private or sectarian interests; hence did not exhibit the spirit of nationalism and good governance. The region is yet to experience citizens who have the political will to address the environmental, economic, social and political conflicts facing the citizens.

I wish to reinstate once more that an urgent and a useful approach for dealing with the problem of governance have to be strategic in restoring peace, trust and credibility in the region. This can also be achieved:

1. through greater participation by the citizens in the act of governance, by incorporating and involving them in decision making processes;
2. Improve administrative and service delivery by building strong and reliable public institutions in the Delta;
3. Check corruption in public and private circles through institutionalized accountability.
4. Elections in Nigeria must be free and transparent; and pre-election campaigns should be free of violence and politically motivated assassinations.

Unfortunately in the Niger Delta, leaders see themselves as not accountable to the citizens and using their uncontrolled power to steal the commonwealth; hence major crisis of social and economic bases. For a brighter way forward there need to be a change of the mind-set of the 'Nigerian business as usual' where the common good is wrongly referred to by leaders in Nigeria as 'national cake'.²⁴⁹ The so-called democratic set-up in Nigeria has witnessed the wanton disregard by leaders and legislators at all levels of government for ethics. Funds are misappropriated and bogus claims on allowances are rampant with unnecessary and unproductive trips abroad just to have estacode. While pensioners and civil servants are not being paid, Nigerian law-makers at all levels of government revel and claim pensions at the end of their terms. The lack of accountability and transparency is responsible for the disregard for those in governance. Citizens are not aware of the windfall from neither oil revenue nor where it goes; and the nation's external debts continue to be on the increase. Because of this lack of transparency in governance, there is capital flight because of the hardship put in the way of would-be-investors whose confidence in the economy is lost due to the machinations of bureaucracy.²⁵⁰

Nigerian leaders delude the citizens in their assertion that dividends of democracy (a bastardized slogan) are available to the people. The disillusion of the people who have been affected on the pretext that their interests are being protected has led to most of the disturbances in the Niger Delta by restive youths. It is clear that this group in the Niger Delta society is an easy pawn in the hands of politicians and community leaders in stirring trouble to draw attention to demands and settle scores. As I have often observed in this work, the government has not put in place the necessary machinery to combat income poverty, skewed income distribution and corruption. This is responsible for the notoriety the country has earned in the world of accountability, transparency and welfares for citizens. The agitation of the citizens to correct this malaise is quite often dismissed as being politically motivated, a euphemism constantly applied in the Nigerian political vocabulary.²⁵¹

Furthermore, proper political education will also assist in a general political reorientation for the citizens towards a more understanding and appreciation of what democracy and responsibility of citizens entails. It is very unfortunate to state in this

²⁴⁹ Njoku, F.O.C. Development, Conflict and Peace in Nigeria, in: Ikejiani-Clark, M., Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria, Ibadan, 2009, p.235.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Ogujiofor, J.O (ed.) Philosophy, Ideology and Civil Society, Owerri, 2009, p.233.

²⁵¹ Ibid. P.235.

work that there is in the Niger Delta not so much awareness that a citizen also owes the state some responsibilities; which at the long run ensures responsible governance and democracy. Succinctly put, basic citizenship and civic responsibilities like checking the vandalization of public property, respecting the law and the rights of neighbours, civic responsibility of electoral voting, neighbourhood watch and assisting the police in fighting crimes, payment of taxes are basic civil ethical responsibilities citizens of the region are yet to imbibe. Perhaps including civic and political education in the Nigerian educational school curriculum may go a long way in ameliorating this problem.

Finding Solidarity through means of Economic Progress:

The Niger Delta region offers a vast opportunity for a diversified means of livelihood for its citizens. This will help the region to eradicate poverty by empowering them to use their strengths and talents to improve their society and their livelihoods. Unfortunately in the region, many people want only an easy success and easy money, and great numbers of the youths of the region are not prepared to work. However, it is necessary to stress that work is a duty on the part of every citizen of the Delta capable of it. The Niger Delta has to move from the mind-set in which youths of the region besiege oil operation sites and company offices to demand 'settlement', to a new era driven by the dignity of labour where every citizen plays a worthy role for the good of the entire society.

Economic progress should not be concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or groups possessing too much economic power, nor of the political community alone... Everyone in the society has to participate in decision making."²⁵² In other words, private initiative and enterprise should be encouraged. Human work is the only key to decent economic life of the Delta. Work must essentially be the existential expression of the creative ingenuity of the Niger Delta. In the region, a new way of life that promotes the sense of dignity of labour should be encouraged through education. Unless the culture of 'settlement' is eradicated and replaced by that of industry and resourcefulness, it may be difficult to create a Niger Delta

²⁵² Gaudium et Spes, no.65.

society that will be economically sustainable for transformation. It is a well-known fact that when people join hands together in solidarity with one another, they are able to employ their abilities and talents more effectively to achieve their common objectives and goals. This is valid for smaller communities as the family as well as the wider society as associations, organisations, towns, regions and even the nation. When people in the Niger Delta, for instance, join hands together with unity of purpose, unity of direction and unity of action very much can be achieved.²⁵³

The government can be of help in this direction by implementing programmes that will improve the relevance and skills of the workforce (especially of the youth population), to increase productivity and to help youths prepare for entering the workforce; and regular awareness campaigns on decent livelihood and economic empowerment issues.

Cottage industries are necessary strategies to stimulate the growth and sustainable development for the citizens in the region. It can also promote their growth and reduce the tensions in the single oil economy; increase employment and reduce poverty. But agriculture can also play a major role in the region for a more balance economy. From the plentiful natural resources in the region, agriculture will help to provide opportunities for the people to make use of their environment and their acquired capabilities through employment; and also achieve pro-poor, pro-job growth; and diversify the economy over and above petroleum activities.

Some strategies that can be adopted in the region to make agriculture an aspect of the economy and job creation in the region may include:

1. Instead of the oil companies in the region 'sharing money' to restive youths, they can establish a community savings and credit loan programmes that can promote crop production by individuals and cooperative societies.
2. Government and other non-governmental agencies could support local farmers secure necessary inputs, obtain improved-yielding varieties of crops, modern mechanize farming operations and acquire land for large farming.
3. Technical support and training by stake-holders and non-governmental agencies are also indispensable for the sustainable environmental

²⁵³ Cf. Also: Iwejuru, L. Politics and Social Ethics, Enugu, 2008, p.128.

management, erosion and flood control related to the region and the growth in the communities. Support may also be provided for investment in social and economic infrastructure that will create favourable environment for agricultural activities.

4. To set up professional services for farmers, fishermen and women in the region, and also establish a closer cooperation of local farmers with research institutes and agricultural developmental project organisations.

In summary, the priority for agricultural policy for the Niger Delta should be food security for the citizens. The local farmers should also be able to make a decent living and maintain their way of life. Farmers can also be encouraged by subsidies for modern farming equipment and also good roads for easy transportation of their produce. Government should also make policies that will support the practice of sustainable agriculture in the region, not excluding a proper and ethical stewardship of the natural resources of this area.

The Niger Delta Environment: How can it be Sustainable?

Suffice to state that the fulcrum of my argument in the course of this work is that the field of social ethics extends also to addressing the rights of the people in the Niger Delta, the respect for their lives and good health and more still imposes on citizens and stakeholders in the region the serious obligation of promoting an environment that will be sustainable (not only for the citizens now, but also for the future generation) by taking care of the ecosystem that sustains life. Unfortunately, air, water, soil and forest resources as I have earlier stated have been devastated by the exploitation of oil resources by foreign oil companies and the government. As I have also earlier observed, gas flaring and oil spills in the waters and villages of this region make the local inhabitants of the region suffer harm to their health and also affects farm harvests.

Unfortunately, citizens of the region have perceived and responded to all these environmental problems by sometimes through some unsocial, unethical and anti-democratic means such as picketing oil company facilities, sacking, sabotaging and vandalizing oil installations, engaging in hostage taking, and other forms of social

violence. As the case may be, some of the communities even engage themselves in one form of violent political action targeting the oil companies and other strategic interests of the State. The social impact can also be felt in the Niger Delta where some militant groups have gained access to and used weapons to harass, intimidate, and sometimes, even to harm officials of oil companies.²⁵⁴

So the riddles I am out to solve in my research are to advocate some measures and strategies that can assist in tackling the challenges of violence relating to environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. In my own view, if the rate of environmental degradation and the related violence continues unchecked, human development in the region will also be unsustainable. In the same vein, solutions to them must be found by human beings. As the case may be, my entire proposal for environmental sustainability in the Niger Delta must be people-centred and also must follow the bottom-up approach. My proposal has to follow a system that will embrace partnership between the citizens and the stakeholders in the region; since the manifestations of environmental degradation are really and essentially the unsustainable socio-economic activities of human beings. The following strategies may be of immense help:

1. Strategy to check the loose of natural resources: The Niger Delta with all its endowments of natural resources is a gift to the citizens and in this connection, all stakeholders to develop, preserve and protect the environment. Degraded environment cannot guarantee sustainable development. So because of the extensive loss of forest resources, local communities can actively initiate re-forestation programmes with priority given to African indigenous plant species. Degraded areas in the Delta should be rehabilitated, while polluted areas should be bio-remediated using modern science and technology that can help in bringing solutions to the environmental and developmental problems of the region and also optimise the local capacity.²⁵⁵

2. Strategy for Social and Infrastructural development: Suffice to note that certain infrastructures (hospitals, schools, good roads etc.) can assist immensely in reducing the over dependent in oil and natural resources of the region. Any effective development in the Niger Delta must aim to reduce the tension between the citizens

²⁵⁴ Cf. Also: Ukeje, C. (ed.) *The Niger Delta Conflicts*, pub. Centre for Development and Conflict Management, Ile-Ife, 2002, p.2.

²⁵⁵ Oyeshola, D. *Sustainable development: Issue and challenges for Nigeria*, Ibadan, 2008, p.183.

of the region and the government over the use of oil revenues. Government and citizens of the region must kick-start a relationship that defines a clear social, infrastructural and enforceable citizens' right and contracts. Government can also cultivate a good community relationship by supporting and giving the local communities basic rights for participation in oil activities in the region. Furthermore, timely access to information by the citizens can also assist in reducing tension in the Delta. Well informed and knowledgeable citizens are very critical to sustainable development since they can properly carry out their duties as citizens knowing their options and rights and equally hold their government accountable when they make decisions that undermine people's rights.

3. Strategy for the empowerment of environmental Institutions: Unfortunately, environmental law that addresses the rights and obligations of the government in Nigeria and its citizens has little to offer to individuals harmed by environmental damage.²⁵⁶ Connecting human rights and the environment reveals that human rights abuses often lead to environmental harm, just as environmental degradation may result in human rights violations. So the Nigerian federal ministry of the environment and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) must take full responsibility of all statutory, regulatory and supervisory controls for the environmental management in the Niger Delta. They must ensure that environmental laws are unequivocally enforced. Environmental crimes in the Niger Delta causes a lot of conflict; and so these bodies must be proactive and bring to justice those who commit environmental crimes and abuse of human rights in the region.

As a way forward, some positive principles can be a blue print against which the internal policies and practices of socially responsible companies in the Delta can be aligned. Those principles may address the issue of human rights abuses, equal employment and compensation opportunities, healthy and safe environment for communities and workers in the oil companies, private/public partnership to advance the quality of life in the communities which companies operate. These principles may go a long way in bringing greater respect between host communities and the oil companies in the region.

²⁵⁶ O'Hara Environmental Human Rights and Development in the Niger Delta, in: Asogwa, C.O. (ed.) Human Rights in Nigeria, Enugu, 2004, p.272.

Finally, the legislative arms of the government can also review and update existing environmental laws in Nigeria to protect the rights of citizens; set up a mandatory environmental standards for the oil business in the region that are consistent with average global standards; ensure an easier access to judicial process where citizens whose rights are violated either by the government or the oil companies can seek redress; and also making environmental laws to be strictly enforced otherwise, this institutional strategy may not be feasible.

4. Strategy for a new Partnership for development: In general terms, the new partnership for development would refer to the unanimity of attitude or purpose between the citizens of the Niger Delta region and all stakeholders in the area. Thus, this partnership not only entails the internal development of the region but also the analogous solidarity and respect for all. This involves a fundamental ethical concept in which the quality of the whole can only be derived from the respect for all individual persons in the Niger Delta.

But the kinds of partnership that can be model for the region are not easily feasible due to the heterogeneity of stakeholders and partly because those who are benefiting from the status quo are often unwilling to make concessions required for partnerships. African ethics as it concerns partnership in African societies can also be important in some of the measures in the management of the Niger Delta conflict and also in building a new agenda for development in the region. Some of these measures may include community-based trust and confidence building measures for stakeholders and citizens and in reactive category, a genuine partnership for conciliation. In confines of African tradition as it relates to ethics and human partnership, places supreme value on human life and the protection/security of human life in respect of members of an in-group. For instance, "the essence of Ubuntu is to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and mutual development... Ubuntu is based on the principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and sense of shared destiny between peoples and communities."²⁵⁷

As a general principle, the citizens of the Niger Delta and all stakeholders should partner on what is essential for development to move forward in the facilitation of peace and human security, provision of the necessary infrastructure, effective

²⁵⁷ Francis, D.J. Peace and Conflict Studies: An African Overview of Basic Concepts, in: Best, S.G. (ed.) Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa, Ibadan, 2006, p.88.

management and protection of the environment. There should also be a general agreement and partnership principles for improved environmental governance and for the sustainable use of the resources in the area by stakeholders and local communities.

For the common good of the Niger Delta region, all stakeholders should collectively embrace the ethical principles credibility, accountability and transparency wherein a partnership comes into play by not allowing the influential minority and those in government that own and corporations in the region can no longer be allowed to treat the natural resources of the region as if they were exclusively theirs or in the economic pursuit that is not sustainable. In the Niger Delta, oil multinational corporations are becoming more and more powerful. Questions such as: "To who are the multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta accountable?" have become too important to ignore since companies spend considerable time and money to influence the formations of public policy in their areas of interest which is often at loggerheads with the interest of the citizens. So the partnership tenet of stakeholders in the region will engage in the building a sustainable and peaceful environment, both at the community level and among the government/multinational companies stationing in the villages of the regions. Another factor is that local communities should be involved in all development initiatives, since this measure will further strengthen partnerships, trust and accountability among stakeholders. The principles of partnership will help in dealing with the problems and social conflicts in the Delta due the problems of the environment and conflicts of interests between ownership and control of the resources in the Niger Delta. However, this describes dialectic of diverging interests which do not arise in the case of a focus on sustainability, which is a priority for all stakeholders. Finally, the social and environmental concerns in the Niger Delta are such that an approach to environmental sustainability is require, which will no longer refer to a conflict of interest between communities and government/oil companies; but rather a common approach becomes necessary to achieve sustainable development.

As already indicated, this strategy will involve all the citizens and stakeholders in building a common society which will be sustainable, for neither which purpose the citizens themselves nor the government/oil companies alone proves deficient. Through this strategy, not only are all at the service of the human person and an

ethical society, their balance guarantees a clean/healthy environment and a sound economic basis for justice, peace and fair future for the Niger Delta society and Nigeria as a whole.

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Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich diese Dissertation in allen Teilen selbständig gefertigt und keine anderen, als die in der Arbeit angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe.

Bede Chinedum Nwadinobi