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The Niger Delta Avengers, Autonomous Ethnic Clans and Common Claim over Oil Wells: The Paradox of Resource Control

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Abstract

The geo-political regions of Nigeria even though unequal in size has one natural endowment or the other in commercial quantities. Some of these natural resources are yet to be explored for the benefit of the host communities and the nation at large. The reason is, oil was discovered early in Niger Delta. The wealth from this oil has been the main stay of the Nigerian political economy. This common wealth of the nation is rationally intended to trickle down to all strata of Nigeria in form of good roads, ultra-modern health facilities, quality education, efficient communication network and environmental protection. These common consumption goods have eluded ordinary Nigerians with more devastating effect in the Niger Delta region owing to ineptitude of state actors and their accomplices in Multinational Oil Corporations. This paper therefore investigated the sudden emergence of Niger Delta Avengers militant group.

It also raised fundamental questions such as which ethnic group controls the oil and in whose interest are the militants under different names bombing oil installations?

Key words: Niger Delta Avengers, ethnic clans, geopolitical regions, natural resources

Introduction

The oil rich Niger Delta Region is a reflection of the multi ethnic composition of the wider Nigerian society. Nigeria is made up of different ethnic groups with different arts and cultures reflected glaringly in their behavioural patterns, religious believes, modes of dressing, farm implements and farm produce. There are conflicting accounts of the exact number of these ethnic and socio-cultural groups in Nigeria. For example, Meek (1931) and Bleambo (1990) all cited in Onwunka (2002) found over two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups in Nigeria. Meek found two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria alone. While Bleambo (1990) is of the view that, there are two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups and three hundred and ninety-four (394) language groups in the entire country. General Babangida, the former military president of Nigeria (2002) stipulates that in the absence of an agreed actual number of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, people see the country as made up of over two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups or about three hundred (300) ethnic groups.

For political convenience, the Nigerian state was subdivided into geo-political zones namely: North West, North East, North Central, South West, South East and South South. The Niger Delta States belong to the South South sub-region with about forty (40) ethnic groups speaking about two hundred and fifty (250) different dialects. These ethnic groups include the Efik, Bini, Esan, Ibibio, Igbo, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Yoruba, Isoko, Urhobo, Ukwani, Kalabari, Okrika, Ogoni etc. These autonomous ethnic nationalities live on oil resources, but majority of their local people are still living the life of penury since the discovery of oil in 1956. Therefore, the fundamental question raised by this study is how has the militant agitation impacted on the lives of the rural people of Niger Delta.

Statement of the Research Problem

The situation in Niger Delta region has remained an unanswered research question. When oil was discovered in large commercial quantities in Oloibiri the present Bayelsa State in 1956, little did the over forty (40) ethnic groups of the region knew about the hazards associated with the exploration of crude oil. The gradual extinction of faunal and floral species with general environmental degradation were unknown to the Niger Delta people. Therefore, the oil on their land came with hopes not only for the Niger Deltans, but for the government of Nigeria. The Nigerian government generates over eighty percent (80%) of her annual revenue from the sales of crude oil which according to Jamila (2005) translates to about Twenty Billion US Dollars annually or Fifty-four Million US Dollars daily.

In spite of the enormity of the wealth generated from the region, significant number of the population still remain in abject poverty with glaring features of underdevelopment and neglect in their communities. Oil has only succeeded in bringing unprecedented hardship, deprivations and environmental degradation occasioned by oil pipeline explosions, gas flaring and oil spillages with adverse effect on their means of livelihood.

Against this backdrop, the research problem is two folds. One, to investigate the beneficiaries of militancy in the region. Two, the study intends to probe further with a view to know which autonomous ethnic clan controls the oil resources if the Federal Government of Nigeria eventually practice fiscal federalism and cedes her exclusive powers to the Niger Delta Avengers or the militants generally.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptualization

This paper is predicated on Poverty and Violent Conflict Nexus Theory. The concept of poverty has received a significant academic attention in recent time both as a situation and as a determinant of action. The phenomenon has also captured the concern and responses of policy makers, analysts and the global community. Several theoretical literature has developed over time to explain the causes of poverty and its aftermath. This study therefore, sought to link the emergence of ethnic militias and violent conflicts between state and non-state actors to the politics of neglect and deprivation orchestrated by the political elites of the oil rich region which results to chronic poverty.

Fearon and Laitin (2003) submitted that a large proportion of the world's population is affected by wide spread violence and instability. Most of these people live in poor countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, under circumstances of extreme destitution, poverty and misery. In similar vein, Steward and Fitzgerald (2001) are of the view that conflict once initiated helps to perpetuate poverty, low growth rates and the underdeveloped status of low income countries. Violence kills, injures, and displaces people, increases poverty, hunger and deprivation.

Against this backdrop, it is significant to see how conflict in the Niger Delta impoverished the people and created new opportunities for the poor energetic youths to be recruited into militancy as coping strategy. In situation of extreme poverty, becoming a militant may be seen as a means of survival. The militancy in Niger Delta can therefore, be seen as a political creation by prominent political elites of the region. They give them huge financial support with arms and used them to relegate their political opponents to the back ground.

Bruck, Justino and Verwimp (2006) saw violent conflict as a multidimensional phenomenon covering a range of intensities of violence from riots to wars. Each of these include a broad spectrum of actors including victims, perpetrators, passers-by and

bystanders. They further stated that conflict results from and leads to a variety of cultural, political, social, economic, religious and psychological problems with multiplying effects on individuals, households and groups in the society.

Brucks et al (2006) are of the opinion that violent forms of conflict originate from individual behaviour and their interactions with their unmediated surroundings, their social groups and institutional norms. Violent conflict has the potency to cripple down the political economy of any given country or local community like the case of Niger Delta. It reduces individual's income and displaces people out of their natural homes with resultant effect of what scholars called chronic poverty. Chronic Poverty Report (2004) stated that individuals and households in conflict prone zones are likely to have extremely low levels of monetary assets such as land, salary, lives stocks, housing, cloths, and bank savings.

The characteristics of the poor orchestrated by conflict also include lack of education and inability to read or write, low levels of nutrition and generally poor health and lack of established social capital, networks and political voice.

The report further stated the people impoverished by conflict are mostly found amongst socially marginalized ethnic, religious, indigenous, nomadic and caste groups. Others include migrants and bonded labourers, refugees and internally displaced persons, disable people or those with ill health, especially HIV/AIDS. In some instances, they include poor women and girls, children and older people, especially widows (Chronic Poverty Report, 2004).

In conflict situation where people's means of livelihood is adversely affected, Humphrey and Weinsten (2004) suggested that soldiering or violence similar to what is happening in Niger Delta might be resorted to, as a more attractive means of earning a living when other nonviolence means of earning livelihoods offer limited opportunities.

In cognizance of the above, it is instructive to note that violent conflict does not only affects the income of individuals, but also affects Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a nation. Knight, Loayza and Villanueva (1996) have opined that civil wars on the average lead to a permanent income loss of around two percent of the GDP. In similar vein, Collier (1999) using cross sectional evidence from ninety-two (92) countries between 1960 and 1989 have concluded that national incomes following a seven-year civil war will be roughly 15 percent lower than if the war had not happened at all.

Importantly, scholars in the ranks of Murshed, (2005), Collier and Hoeffler (1998) have outlined two causative factors responsible for conflict. They are greed and grievance. These scholars are of the view that the greed factor emphasizes the role of lootable rents in producing intergroup rivalry for their control. While the grievance factor refers to historical injustices, poverty and intergroup inequalities.

From the foregone analysis, the greed factor is sufficient to explain the crisis in Niger Delta given the enormity of wealth ploughed back to the region through monthly federal revenue allocation to the Niger Delta States, 13 percent revenue from the derivation principle, an intervention agency, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Ministry of Niger Delta, constituency allowances for senators and house of representative members of Niger Delta extraction. In the midst of this plenty wealth that goes back to the region through their elites, a lot is still left to be desired.

Therefore, in order to perpetuate their dominance and political relevance, the elites established and funded cults and militant groups. They unleash terror on fellow cult groups and the wider society in the Niger Delta region, and by extension, the whole country. As such, the activities of the militants in the creeks of Niger Delta since inception up to the emergence of Niger Delta Avengers in 2016 is akin to terrorism. This is evident, if we are to accept the definition of terrorism by Wilkinson (1992) who said:

Terrorism is premeditated and aims to create a climate of extreme fear or terror. It is directed at a wider audience or target than the immediate victims of the violence. It inherently involves attacks on random and symbolic targets including civilians. The act of violence committed and seen by the society in which they occur as extra normal. In the literal sense, they breach the social norms, thus causing a sense of outrage. Terrorism is used to try to influence political behaviour in some way.

Methodology

Content analysis is the method adopted in this study. This work made a systematic analysis of coded materials of the library such as books, magazines, journals, newspapers, bulletins, internet materials, television and radio talks. Essentially, this research is purely qualitative. Although this method may have its own short comings because people may document anything without much substance. However, its strength lies in the fact that such written materials are in public domain and easily verifiable.

Discussion

Nature has been so good to Nigeria. The country is endowed with abundant natural resources. Each region of the federation has one nature gift with comparative advantage. Interestingly, these natural gifts in each region predates the colonial amalgamation of 1914. If by the will of nature, the colonial lords divided Nigeria into three independent nations, the natural resources of each region would have generated revenue sufficiently for the sustenance of the region.

For example, the Northern region is abundantly blessed with food crops, cash crops, lives stocks, hide and skin, fresh water fisheries products. The western region cultivated in large scale agricultural products such as cocoa and rubber, while the Eastern region exclusively produced palm kernel and palm oil. These agricultural products of each region were the only source of foreign exchange for the Nigerian political economy prior to the discovery of oil.

The discovery of oil came with new life style which adversely affected the traditional agricultural practices. This resulted to a significant fail in cash and food crops production from all the regions towards the end of 20th century (Retrieved from a document titled “Conflict in the Niger Delta” on 17/11/2016).

Cocoa production dropped by 43%. Nigeria was the world largest cocoa exporter in 1960. Rubber dropped by 29%, cotton by 65% and groundnut by 64%. In spite of the large number of skilled, well paid Nigerians who have been employed by the oil corporations, the majority of Nigerians and mostly especially the people of Niger Delta States and the far north have become poorer since the 1960s.

A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey

ABUJA (FCT) Marble Tantalite	BENUE Lead/zinc Limestone Iron-ore	EKITI Kaolin Feldspar Tatium Granite Syenites	KATSINA Kaolin Marble Salt	Cooking Coal Talc Clay Salt Chalcopyrite	Iron-Ore Kaolin Cassiterite Gold (<i>partially investigated</i>) Lead/Zinc Dolomite
ABIA Gold Salt Limestone Lead/Zinc Oil and Gas	Coal Clay Marble bauxite Salt Barites (traces) Gemstone	ENUGU Coal Limestone Lead/Zinc	KEBBI Gold	NIGER Gold Talc Lead/Zinc Iron-Ore	Bentonite Cassiterite Phrochloro Clay Coal Wolram
ADAMAWA Kaolin Bentonite Gypsum Magnesite Barites Bauxite	Oil and gas BORNO Diatomite Clay Limestone Oil and gas	GOMBE Gemstone Gypsum	KOGI Iron-Ore Kaolin Gypasum Feldspar Coal Marble Dolomite Talc Tantalite Kaolin	Phosphate Clay Feldspar (<i>traces</i>)	Bismuth Fluoride Molybdenite Gemstone Bauxite
AKWA IBOM Clay Limestone Lead/Zinc Uranium (<i>traces</i>) Oil and Gas	(partially investigated) Gypsum Kaolin Bentonite	IMO Lead/Zinc Limestone Lignite Phosphate Marcasite Gypsum Salt Oil and Gas	Limestone Gemstone Bitumen	OGUN Phosphate Clay Feldspar (<i>traces</i>)	
ANAMBRA	CROSS RIVER Limestone	JIGAWA Barites	KWARA Gold Marble Iron-Ore Cassiterite	ONDO Bitumen Kaolin Gemstone Gypsum Feldspar Granite Clay Glass-sand Dimension stones	RIVERS Glass-sand Clay Marble Lignite (<i>traces</i>) Oil and Gas

Lead/Zinc Clay Limestone Iron-Ore Lignite (<i>partially investigated</i>) Salt Glass-sand Phosphate Gypsum	Uranium Manganese Lignite Lead/zinc Salt Oil and gas	KADUNA Sapphire Kaolin Gold Slay Serpentine Asbestos Amethyst Kyanite Graphite (<i>partially investigated</i>) Sillimanite (<i>partially investigated</i>) Mica (<i>traces</i>) Aquamarine Ruby Rock crystal Topaz Fluorspar Tourmaline Gemstone Tantalite	Columbite Tantalite Feldspar (<i>traces</i>) Mica (<i>traces</i>)	Coal Bauxite Oil and Gas	SOKOTO Kaolin Gold Limestone Phosphate Gypsum Silica-sand Clay Laterite Potash Flakes Granite Salt
BAUCHI Amethyst Gypsum Lead/Zinc Uranium (<i>partially investigated</i>)	Lignite Iron-ore Kaolin Oil and gas	KANO Pyrochlore Cassiterite Copper Glass-sand Gemstone Lead/Zinc tantalite	LAGOS Glass-sand Clay Bitumen Sand tar Oil and Gas	OSUN Gold Talc Tantalite Tourmaline Columbite Granite	TARABA Kaolin Lead/Zinc
BAYLSA Clay Gypsum (<i>partially investigated</i>) Manganese (<i>partially investigated</i>) Lignite (<i>partially investigated</i>) Lead/Zinc (<i>traces</i>) Oil and Gas	DELTA Marble Glass-sand Clay Gypsum Lignite Iron-ore Kaolin Oil and gas	NASARAWA Beryl (<i>Emerald</i>), Acquamarine & Hellodor) Dolomite/Marbl e Sapphite Tourmaline Quartz Amethyst (<i>Garnet, Topaz</i>) Zircon Tantalite Cassiterite Columbite Ilmenite Galena Iron-Ore Barites Feldspar Limestone Mica	OYO Kaolin Marble Clay Silimanite Talc Gold Cassiterite Aquamarine Dolomite Gemstone Tantalite	YOBE Diatomite Soda ash (<i>partially investigated</i>)	ZAMFARA Gold
	EDO Marble Clay Limestone Iron-Ore Gypsum Glass-sand Gold Dolomite Phosphate Bitumen Oil and Gas			PLATEAU Emerald Tin Marble Granite Tantalite/ Columbite Lead/Zinc Barytes	

SOURCE: - *Federal Ministry of Solid Minerals, Abuja.* Adopted from *Newswatch Magazine*, 1993

The Niger Delta Region and the Paradox of Resource Control

The Niger Delta region is a recent political creation that include nine states as follows: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. The region, like other regions of the federation is blessed with natural resources such as palm trees, coconuts sea foods like periwinkles, fish and crayfish. However, oil is the nature gift that brought Niger Delta Region to limelight. Oil like the Nigerian state was also a colonial creation. The ordinance that made oil and other mineral resources in Nigerian soil the exclusive reserve of the British crown was promulgated in 1914, the very year Nigeria was amalgamated. Shell D'Arcy as it was called then was the sole

company granted the license to explore minerals and petroleum in the whole Nigerian colony under the British (Schatz, 1977).

This monopoly of exploration enjoyed by Shell was the beginning of the deprivations and hardship in Niger Delta. By 1956, the colonial target of discovering oil in large commercial quantities was met in Oloibiri, a community close to Port Harcourt, now in Bayelsa State. At independence, the exclusive ownership of mineral resources initially enjoyed by the British crown became the exclusive reserve of the Federal government of Nigerian.

Since then, oil has become the main stay of the Nigerian political economy. According to the United States Energy Information Administration (EIA, 2016 Revised Version), Nigeria is currently the largest producer of oil in Africa and was the fourth world's largest exporter of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in 2015. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) cited by EIA, 2016, oil and natural export revenue which was almost \$87 billion in 2014 accounted for 58% of Nigeria's total government revenue in that year. Oil and gas is the country's main source of foreign exchange amounting to over 95% of Nigeria's total export to the world in 2014 (EIA, 2016).

In spite of all these revenues from oil, Niger Delta remain poor with large scale environmental abuse and human right violations. The region has been bedevilled by oil spills, Gas flaring, appropriation of land, contamination of sources of drinking water, damage to food supplies, ill health and reduced incomes (Kirwan, 1999).

As a result of these environmental challenges and deprivations, Niger Delta became inundated with ethnic militias some with genuine reason for agitation while majority are criminally inclined with self-aggrandizement motive. The era of Saro Wiwa saw the establishment of organizations that spearheaded genuine agitation to emancipate Niger Delta Region, such genuine organizations include the movement for the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP), Association of Mineral Producing Areas of Rivers State (AMPARS), the Association of Minority Oil States (AMOS), the Ethnic Minority Rights Organisation of Nigeria (EMIRON), the Ethnic Minority Rights Organisation of Africa (EMIROAF), the Nigerian Society for the Protection of the Environment (NISOPEN), and the Movement for Reparation to Ogbia or Oloibiri (MORETO) (Suberu,1996).

MOSOP has genuinely took the struggle of the oil communities to the international arena. According to *Newswatch* (1993), and *Tell Magazine* (1993)

Ken Saro Wiwa has made presentations to international organizations such as the United Nations Organization (UNO), the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), the British Parliamentary Human

Rights Group (BHRG), Amnesty International, the Green Peace Organisation and the London Rain Forest Action Group.

After this genuine agitation, the Ijaws drew a line of demarcation between them and other ethnic groups in the Niger Delta Region. They assumed superior ethnic status that set them against the rest of the oil producing communities. At this point, selfish politicians took advantage of the divisions and lured the youths into militancy (Semenitari, 2005)

Against this backdrop, militant groups began to emerge precisely in 2004. Such as Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV). The two major deadly groups are the Mujahid Asari Dokubo's NDPVF and Ateke Tom's NDV. Although, they parade smaller militant groups numbering over one hundred. These smaller militant groups may have their relative autonomy, but they are mostly in alliances with either NDPVF or NDV which makes it possible for them to access military trainings and combat instructions from either commander Asari or Tom.

To further attest that Niger Delta crisis is criminally inclined, Crisis Group Africa Report of (2006) stated that

from mid-2003 to late 2004, Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom engaged in a tough war that killed hundreds and left tens of thousands homeless. The sizeable, centuries old towns of Buguma, Bukuma and Tombia were badly damaged and areas of the Rivers Capital Port Harcourt also razed. Some residents have alleged that the fighting centered around control of areas noted for oil theft. The conflict also allegedly revolved around competing bids for control of tribal chieftaincy titles in Buguma and Okrika and other positions with access to government and company oil revenues.

Taking the above into cognizance, the poverty nexus addressed in the theoretical frame work of this paper come to bear. Gbomo Jomo the spoke person of MEND is strongly of the view that individual fighters in the Niger Delta fight to achieve personal objectives. He said in the crisis Group Report 2006 that:

In every struggle, there is bound to be several versions as seen through the eyes of different participants. Some are fighting for a car, some for pride, some a job or even food to eat, the more ambitious with the hope that they may someday be governors, or local government chairmen, legislators etc. in new states. These individuals for now, are as leaves adrift and will go where we take them. For them anywhere is better than here.

Obviously, with this poverty nexus, criminality in the Niger Delta began to flourish unabated. They bomb oil installations of both government and multinationals. They kidnapped foreign oil workers, foreign contractors and influential indigenous members of the Niger Delta region. Bombing and kidnapping became a lucrative business for the militants until the emergence of their son, Goodluck Jonathan as the president, the oil thieves became the guards of oil pipes. Consequently, bombing of oil installations stopped throughout the tenure of Goodluck Jonathan.

Since the Niger Delta crisis is politically motivated, Mijahid Asari Dokubo said “If Goodluck Jonathan did not win 2015 general elections and return as president, militancy will resume in Niger Delta. That they were only on recess because of their Ijaw son (Goodluck Jonathan). As faith will have it, Jonathan lost in the 2015 elections and by 2016, Niger Delta militants re-grouped under new nomenclature “Niger Delta Avengers”.

Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)

Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) is another notorious militant group that emerged in the Niger Delta Region around January 2016, but appeared in public domain in March 2016. This group formed alliances with other existing militant groups of the region such as Red Egbesu, Water Lions, Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force, Niger Delta Red Square, Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate. (Retrieved on 17/11/2016)

The group claimed to have in their midst young energetic youths that studied in Eastern Europe and they have travelled wide across the globe. Their main aim is to carve out Niger Delta as a sovereign political entity. A document retrieved on 17/11/2016 stated that

The NDA have attacked oil producing facilities in the Delta, causing the shutdown of oil terminals and fall in Nigeria’s oil production to its lowest level in Twenty years. The attacks caused Nigeria to fall behind Angola as Africa’s largest oil producer. The reduced oil output has hampered the Nigerian economy and destroyed its budget.

The Conspicuous Divisions in Niger Delta

This section raised some fundamental questions for further research by scholars. If Nigerian state is to practice true fiscal federalism and cede the oil resources to Niger Delta, which ethnic group or militant group would control the resources?

Secondly, what is the Niger Delta Avengers avenging and in whose interest are they avenging? Are they fighting in defense of the Niger Delta public officials arrested by EFCC for corrupt practices or is their bombing of oil pipelines in defense of Edwin Clark led elders or Alfred Diете Spiff led elders?

It is important to note that, on the 2nd June, 2016, President Muhammadu Buhari made true his campaign promises of serious commitment to the development of Niger Delta by flagging up the clean-up Ogoni land process at Bodo, Gokana Local Government Area of River State. In spite of the dwindling resources occasioned by the criminal bombing of oil installations by Federation of Niger Delta Militants under the arrow head of Niger Delta Avengers.

This was the prevailing situation when the so called “elders” of the region waded in to discuss with the federal government of Nigeria for lasting solution. The aftermath of this interface between the region elders and the federal government revealed an age long disunity existing in Niger Delta.

On 1st November, 2016, Niger Delta elders led by Edwin Clark under the auspices of pan Niger Delta Forum met President Buhari and presented a sixteen (16) points demands to him for the development of Niger Delta, so that the militants under whatever guise would shield their swords. The sixteen demands are as follows:

1. Presidential amnesty programme
2. Law and justice issues
3. The effect of increased military presence in the Niger Delta
4. The plight of internally displaced people
5. The Ogoni clean-up and environmental remediation
6. The maritime university issue
7. Key regional critical infrastructure
8. Security surveillance and protection of oil and gas infrastructure
9. Relocation of administrative and operational headquarters of international oil companies to Niger Delta
10. Power supply
11. Economic Development and empowerment
12. Inclusive participation in oil industry and ownership of oil blocs
13. Restructuring and funding of NDDC
14. Strengthening the Niger Delta ministry.
15. The Bakasi question recommends a comprehensive resettlement plan including development for the host communities and displaced population.

16. Fiscal federalism supports the call for true federalism. (Retrieved on 17/11/2016)

In disagreement with the pan Niger Delta Forum led by Edwin Clark, Chief Alfred Diete Spiff led another group under the platform of Niger Delta People's Congress (NDPC) to meet with the vice president, Yemi Osinbajo and presented another demand on behalf of the Niger Delta people. What can be deduced from Alfred's presentation is ethnic dichotomy in the Niger Delta because his group's demand has no difference in content with that of Edwin Clark's group. The following are their demands:

1. Political reconstruction and fiscal federalism
2. Demilitarization and peace/confidence building
3. Relocation of operation headquarters of multinational companies to the region
4. Resumption of academic activities at the Maritime University Okeren Koko Delta State
5. Funding interventionist agencies
6. Environmental and human right protection
7. Immediate clean-up of Niger Delta affected by oil spillage.
8. Provide medical facilities and attention to people suffering from ailments associated with oil and gas activities.
9. Establishment of internally displaced camps in Bakasi and Gbaramatu.

On the other hand, the Niger Delta Youths are not comfortable with the composition of the leaders discussing issues affecting their region with the federal government. They said the leaders are the people destroying the region. They are using these different factions to cause more problem. With this sharp divisions cutting across all generations of the region, who do you trust with the oil resources of the region? (Retrieved on 17/11/2016)

Conclusion

The Niger Delta is exploited, polluted, impoverished, oppressed and suppressed by multinational corporations aided and abated by successive political structures of Nigeria since independence. The very basis of the region's heritage has been destroyed with the connivance of their own sons and daughters. Given the financial benefits from oil theft, from oil companies and government payoffs, each ethnic group develop its own militants to blow off oil pipelines and get money in return. This prolonged criminal means of self-enrichment has also set the ethnic groups against each other.

Consequently, they cannot speak with one voice for the development of their region and therefore cannot control the resources under the exclusive reserve of the existing federal structure of Nigeria.

This paper sincerely made the following recommendations:

- ✓ Massive infrastructural development of Niger Delta region by the federal government, state governments, local governments and multinational oil companies.
- ✓ Communities close to oil installations should be relocated to a modern town with all facilities to be constructed by the multinational oil companies.
- ✓ Communities should be clustered to own oil wells with provision for future expansion or incremental growth.
- ✓ Militants should embrace dialogue and stop criminal bombing of oil installations.
- ✓ The federal government coercive instruments including military action should be taken against any criminal group in the Niger Delta who refuses to embrace genuine dialogue. Same action should be taken against any individual, group or community that provide safe haven for criminal militants

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