



# **Consolidating Peace in the Niger Delta for National Development in Nigeria: Rising Beyond Tokenism**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author UTS designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author MEUT managed the analyses of the study and the literature review. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study attempts an investigation into oil politics and other related issues that have generated security crisis in the Niger Delta region, which made peace to elude the people over the years. For decades, peace in the Niger Delta remains a mirage because of the violence and counter violence unleashed by the different stakeholders in oil production in the Niger Delta. While the militants in the Niger Delta resorted to kidnapping of expatriates, oil theft, and the destruction of oil installations of the international oil companies to register their grievances against the Nigerian state and international oil companies over the debilitating development conditions in oil producing communities, the Nigerian state had militarized the region to maintain law and order in the oil producing areas in order to secure oil installations of the international oil companies which were targeted for destruction by the militants who felt the federal government and oil companies have not done enough to improve the living conditions of the people. To pacify the Niger Delta people and to ensure seamless oil production in the region, the federal government introduced some initiatives and created different Commissions such as the Oil Mineral Producing Areas

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Development Commission, increased derivation formula in revenue allocation to 13 percent and the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission to engender peace and development in the region. In recent times however, the federal government in furtherance of its commitment to resolve the Niger Delta crisis created the Ministry of Niger Delta and equally granted Amnesty for repentant militants with a view to re-integrating them back to the society in the interest of national peace and development. Except for Amnesty Programme which introduced relative peace in the Niger Delta, which itself failed to address the root causes of underdevelopment, all other initiatives have not engendered development and lasting peace in the oil-rich Niger Delta region. These initiatives and Commissions were simply tokenism as they failed to fundamentally, reposition the region on the path of sustainable growth and development. However, in generating data for this research, both primary and secondary data were used for analysis. The primary data were obtained from questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions carried out in Bayelsa and River states. The study concluded that peace and development is possible in the Niger Delta if conscious and deliberate efforts are made by the government and international oil companies to improve the lots of the people who bear the devastating consequences of oil production in Nigeria.

*Keywords: Development; militancy; national security; Niger Delta; oil politic; peace initiatives.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria's contemporary history, it is difficult if not impossible to argue against the value and contribution of oil, buried in the swampy terrain of the Niger Delta region to the Nigerian economy [1]. The Nigeria state is standing tall and has occupied her pride of place among the comity of nations because of the oil-rich Niger Delta that generates enormous revenue for socio-economic and political development. Therefore, there is no gain saying the fact that oil production in Nigeria remains the fulcrum of industrialization necessary to reposition Nigeria on the path of sustainable growth and development [2]. However, it is pertinent to note that oil in Nigeria is mined from only 9 of Nigeria's 36 states. Approximately 75% of Nigeria's oil and over 50% of its earnings are obtained from just (3) of these oil producing states in the Niger Delta [3].

Despite producing the chunk of the national wealth, the living conditions of the people is appalling without good roads, hospitals, schools and electricity necessary for decent living [2,4]. These development issues have generated tensions in the Niger Delta over the years, as the inhabitants of the area believed that the wealth from the area is siphoned by few greedy elites of the Nigeria state who derive pleasure in keeping the region down in the midst of abundant oil wealth [5]. Thus, the people have lost confidence in the Nigerian state, as they maintained that the oil wealth has added no value to their lives. Rather, oil production is responsible for poverty and environmental degradation reducing the oil producing communities to epicenters of pollution [6].

This belief is by no means a new phenomenon. Few years after the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in the present day Bayelsa state in 1956, Isaac Adaka Boro and his comrades in arms started agitating for a fair share of oil wealth which culminated into an attempt for secession from Nigerian federation in 1966 in what is popularly known as the "Twelve Days Revolution". During the liberation movement, Isaac Adaka Boro was quoted as saying:

Let us examine with some latitude whether the state of development is to any extent commensurate with a tint of the bulk of the already tapped mineral and agricultural resources. Therefore, remember your seventy year old grandmother who still farms before she eats; remember also your poverty stricken people; remember too your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins and then fight for your freedom [7].

The federal government subdued the movement by employing the federal forces [8]. Corroborating this, it was further argued by experts that the insurrection was easily crushed by police action because the rebellion was premature and the people had not been sufficiently sensitized [9].

However, the 1990's witnessed unprecedented agitations in the Niger Delta from different ethnic nationalities such as the Ogoni, Ijaw, Okrika, Ogbia, Ikwerre etc. that bear oil in their communities. These agitations shook the foundation of the Nigeria state given the different declarations made by these groups and the

security challenges their activities generated in the Niger Delta [10,11]. Military force as usual, was used by the federal military government to gag, brutalize and suppress the people, to maintain law and order as exemplified in the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight (8) of his comrades in 1995 [12].

Nevertheless, the advent of democratic government in 1999 in Nigeria, and the relative freedom associated with democracy contributed in no small measure in opening the floodgates of full-fledged militancy by the youths, where the oil fields were reduced to epicenters of kidnapping and destructions by the aggrieved youths in the Niger Delta region. In fact, Nigeria's oil fields were said to be among the most dangerous in the world [7]. Responding to these threats, the Nigerian state militarized the region to maintain peace and order which failed [5]. To this end, the federal government took the old path of 'buying' peace in the Niger Delta with the idea of Amnesty Programme. This move was not entirely new in search of peace and development in the Niger Delta region.

It is noteworthy that, in the past, the federal government introduced different initiatives and established different Commissions to bring about peace and to stimulate development in the Niger Delta so as to allay their fears and to dispel the belief that the federal government is not interested in liberating the region from the shackles of unemployment, poverty, ignorance and disease [13]. First, was the establishment of Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961, to Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) 1992, the insertion of 13 percent derivation in 1999 Constitution as amended, then later the establishment of Niger Delta Development Commission NDDC in the year 2000 [14]. These were later followed by the establishment of the Ministry of Niger Delta and finally, the granting of Amnesty to the militants [15,16,17]. Therefore, the extent to which these Commissions and initiatives have been able to meet their objectives for development and lasting peace in the Niger Delta formed the basis of this research.

## **2. FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES IN THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS**

It is a fact that the Niger Delta crisis has been raging for a very long time. Efforts by successive governments to find lasting solution to the crisis proved abortive [18]. A lot of factors have been

advanced to understand why the crisis festers and lingers over the years. These include but not limited to the land question, environmental degradation poverty and infrastructure deficit, revenue allocation formula, corruption, etc.

### **2.1 The Land Question**

One of the major reasons why the crisis in the Niger Delta festers and lingers is due to the land laws in Nigeria. This truism was laid bare when it was argued that:

More than anything else, the land question appears to be a sore-point in the tripartite relationship between the oil-bearing communities, the oil companies and the federal government. The Land Use Act of 1978 redefined the legal position on land ownership in Nigeria by vesting the ownership of all land within a state in the state Governor. Section 28 of the Land Use Act stipulates that the state Governor could revoke a right of occupancy for overriding public interest which included 'requirement of land for mining purposes or oil pipeline or for any purpose connected therewith. The Land Use Act seems to have impacted negatively on the people of the Niger Delta. For one, oil-bearing communities lost their right to question the incursion of oil firms into their land. Again, they were no more entitled to compensation for the acquisition of their land, safe of course, for the surface use of the land [4].

Therefore, land which is the basis of the people's existence and survival had been taken away by the government and the people have nothing to hold onto, as the government collected the their land and handed it over to the oil companies to build refineries, NLNG plants and staff quarters across various oil producing communities in the Niger Delta.

Reinforced this argument, experts stated that on account of the fact that land rights in Nigeria were traditionally vested in the respective local communities, minerals and mineral oil resources found beneath the land of the communities therefore, naturally belongs to the indigenous people. However, the local communities in Nigeria were later excluded from the ownership of mineral resources by way of decrees, legislative enactments and constitutional provisions which made the people tenants on their own lands [19]. The inability of the federal

government to amend some of the provisions of the Land Use Act which the Niger Delta people considered obnoxious has accentuated the crisis in the Niger Delta which affects the oil sector and it's gains in the development of Nigeria, because oil exploration and mining take place in tensed and crisis environment as a result of the activities of IOCs that have denied the oil bearing communities their immediate means of sustenance in farming and fishing which are the traditional occupation of the people [20].

Similarly, it was further argued that the Land Use Act of 1978 as refurbished in 2004, as well as the various Petroleum related Acts such as the Pipeline Act of 1962 and the Petroleum Act of 1969 have finally cut off the minorities of the Niger Delta from direct oil revenue and re-enforced the dependency of the minorities on the majorities for a share of the oil wealth [21]. For the purpose of this study, a summary of these laws is important. The Pipeline Act of 1962 provides: "An Act to make provision for license to be granted for the establishment and maintenance of pipelines incidental and supplementary to oil fields and mining and for purposes ancillary to such pipelines". Under section 50 of the Act, it maintained that, a permit to survey shall entitle the holder, to enter together with his officers, agents, workmen or other servants and with any necessary equipment or vehicle, on any land upon the route specified in the permit or reasonably close to such route for the following purposes:

To survey and take level of land, to dig and sore into the soil and subsoil, to dig out and remove trees and other vegetation as may impede the purposes specified in this subsection, and to do all other acts necessary to ascertain the suitability of the land for establishment of oil pipeline or ancillary installations and shall entitle the holder, with such person's equipment or vehicles as aforesaid, to pass over land adjacent for the purpose of obtaining access to land upon the route specified [22].

This particular Act therefore, empowered the oil companies to ruthlessly destroy the natural environment in the Niger Delta which the inhabitants depend on for livelihood and sustenance which poses major threats to human security in the region and, by implication, to the Nigerian state, as it is now widely accepted that security is not only about defending the sovereignty of a state, but also protecting the human ecosystem from the destructive effects of

economic activities, for the benefit of both the present and future generations [23]. This, the international oil corporations are not concerned with so long as oil will continue to flow in the Niger Delta.

Therefore, with all these laws, the Niger Delta people feel deprived of their God's given wealth, laying the foundation for tension between the federal government of Nigeria and the Niger Delta region wherein oil resources are located [5]. Understandably, the payment of compensations to the state Governors rather than to land owners compounded the problem and increased the spate of protests in the Niger Delta. Indeed, a clear manifestation of the potency of the land question was seen in the Kaiama Declaration of the all Ijaw Youth Conference of December 1998, which raised the land question to the level of a political manifesto. Having reviewed the long history of the plunder of Ijaw and by extension, Niger Delta oil wealth, the declaration asserted that 'all land and natural resources (including mineral resources) within the Ijaw territory belong to Ijaw communities and are the basis of their survival'. The unambiguous phrasing of the demands must have set the tone and direction of the agitation for resource ownership and control in the Niger Delta [24]. This is at the heart of the Niger Delta crisis over the years.

## 2.2 Environmental Degradation

There is no doubt that oil has been of great benefit to the Nigerian state and the people as a whole but the oil pollution caused by spillages from the oil industry located primarily in the Niger Delta region has caused massive destruction to farmlands, sources of drinking water, mangrove forest, fishing grounds and declination of fish, crabs, periwinkles and birds [25]. Therefore, large areas of mangrove forest have been destroyed by oil exploration and exploitation. Some past spills have necessitated the complete relocation of some communities, loss of ancestral homes, pollution of fresh water, loss of forest and agricultural land, destruction of fishing grounds and reduction of fish population, which is the major source of income for the Niger Delta people [6,26]. This has been among the cause of conflicts in the Niger Delta between oil companies and the oil bearing communities over the years.

Buttressed this, Shell and Chevron, the two Transnational Oil Corporations TNOCs with the

largest onshore and near shore operations in the Niger Delta, are the major culprits, in this crime against the people, which partly explain why they are the main targets of most contemporary violent anti-oil protests (including the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta MEND activities) [27]. Such “petro-violence” mostly affects oil companies with facilities and operations near human settlements (i.e. onshore and near shore areas). Thus, oil companies that mostly operate offshore, such as ExxonMobil, are less culpable for environmental offenses against, and encroachment on human settlements and livelihoods, and therefore, are less likely to antagonize the Niger Delta communities. The large onshore facilities of the federally owned NNPC cause as much ecological damage as some of the Transnational Oil Companies. Paradoxically, local protesters and militias rarely attack the NNPC-apparently most locals perceive the NNPC as an outlaw arm of the state that will mobilize its security forces to resist any pressure to pay compensation in the event of environmental breaches associated with its oil facilities and operations [27].

Furthermore, gas flaring is a primary source of air pollution in the Niger Delta. The oil companies are wrecking and devastating the ecosystem of the Niger Delta through uncontrollable gas flaring. Gas flaring takes place twenty four hours and some are believed to be burning for over thirty years, thereby resulting in the release of hydrogen sulphide and other toxic substances [23,28]. Therefore, the oil companies are not only destroying the Niger Delta, they are also contributing to global warming. Again, the pollutants released and the noises from the vibration are injurious to human health. It is also argued that the chemical emissions from gas flaring contribute to acid rain, trigger skin diseases and quick corrosion of roofing sheets in the Niger Delta [29]. All these make the crisis in the Niger Delta to linger. Unfortunately, available evidence shows that the trend is worsening as the government lacks the political will to ensure compliance to rules by the oil companies [30].

Therefore, the nature and character of Nigeria ruling and governing elites which includes: greed, selfishness, parochialism, pettiness and general irresponsible conducts have made the Niger Delta crisis to linger as the Nigerian elites subordinate themselves to foreign capital most especially the IOCs exploiting oil in the Niger Delta [24]. This is the reason why the Nigerian state cannot maintain global standards in oil

exploration and mining. This is not the same in other climes. It can be recalled, in 2010, there was a case of oil spillage in the Gulf of Mexico from the activities of British Petroleum. The United States media kept the whole world awake and President Barrack Obama made sure adequate compensation was paid to the victims. Unfortunately, the people of the Niger Delta have suffered over five decades of oil spillage and the Nigerian state cannot demand the oil companies to do the needful. The Nigerian elites have taken side with international capital that is the more reason why the Nigerian state appears very reluctant in holding the oil companies responsible for violating global best practices in oil production [5]. This weakness has emboldened the oil companies who continue to devastate the environment and renege on their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) which make the crisis to continue unabated. The Niger Delta crisis is not insurmountable; it is not a rocket science. It is just that a lot of people make fortunes from the crisis that is why the crisis appears to defy resolution.

### **2.3 Poverty and Infrastructure Deficit**

Poverty is a painful reality in the Niger Delta region. Study revealed that the poverty rates in Bayelsa and Rivers states stand at 29% and 21% respectively [31]. For decades, the Niger Delta region like others in Nigeria, has struggled with the issue of socio-economic development, which has remained in decline in the face of increasing revenue from crude oil [32,33]. The deepening incidence and dynamics of poverty in the Niger Delta is so grave that generates tensions and social conflicts which have eroded the fabric that holds the society together.

Poverty in the Niger Delta has manifested itself in different ways which include joblessness, economic dependence, lack of freedom, lack of access to land and credit, over-indebtedness, inability to save or own assets etc. The poor tend to live in slums and dirty localities that exert pressures on the physical environment thereby contributing, however inadvertently, to environmental degradation as a result of excruciating neglect and marginalization [23,34].

Therefore, experts described the situation in the Niger Delta as a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict. The situation has

progressively continued to deteriorate; chiefly as a result of the nonchalance of the stakeholders particular the government and oil companies which disconnected itself from the people, and careless, about human rights [2,20,35]. These behaviors continue to pitch the oil producing communities against the IOCs and the government.

This reflects the views of an expert who maintained that:

The paradoxes and contradictions of oil are nowhere greater than on the oil fields of the Niger Delta. In the oil rich state of Bayelsa and Delta, there used to be one Doctor for every 150,000 inhabitants. Oil has wrought only poverty, state violence and a dying ecosystem-and over 6000 oil spills since 1970. The government's presence 'is only felt in the form of the machine gun and jack boats' [36].

Suffice it to say that, while oil wealth ushered in development of infrastructure facilities elsewhere in the country, the golden goose that produces the golden eggs suffered excruciating neglect and marginalization as infrastructure are almost non-existent. Where they exist, to say the least, they are deplorable with no hope in sight of revamping them to serve the people of the oil bearing communities who produce enormous wealth for Nigeria. Thus, the reason for this development failure is not fat-fetched. The elites or the ruling class over the years have preoccupied themselves with primitive accumulation in the oil sector which left the development of critical infrastructure unattended to in the oil bearing communities, resulting in the decay of health care system, education system, road net networks among so many other needs [37]. Therefore, the crisis in the Niger Delta is a crisis of development created and sustained by the Nigerian governing and ruling elites over the years. The governing elites show no restraint in privatizing and accumulating collective patrimony which killed development in the Niger Delta and by extension, in Nigeria [5].

## 2.4 Revenue Allocation Formula

It's a truism that the discovery of oil came with it a brand new politics which is considered as politics of revenue allocation which the Niger Delta people believed that it erodes the development of the region [32]. This apart from making it impossible for oil wealth to impact on

the Niger Delta and the nation in development terms, it creates the atmosphere of rancor that accentuates crisis owing to grievances arising from the inequality in sharing of oil resources [38].

However, it was argued that the struggle for the control of the nation's oil resources have to some extent been based on regional cleavages [39]. The Nigerian state is made up of six geo-political zones with three dominant ethnic groups alongside numerous minority groups seen mostly among the oil bearing Niger Delta region and the middle belt. There is obvious political struggle for oil wealth as each region struggles for ample resource space. One way this is made known is how benefits are allocated from generated oil revenue in the revenue sharing formula. To this end, revenue allocation continues to be a sensitive issue in Nigeria. The sensitivity of the issue is understandable as it affects the division of the national wealth. The major disagreements have centered on the principles used and the formula in sharing [39].

Accordingly, between 1946 and 1980, the revenue formula was reviewed eight times, these include: the Phillipson Commission of 1946, Hicks Phillipson Commission of 1951, Chick Commission of 1953, Raisman Commission of 1958, Binns Commission of 1964, Dinna Committee of 1968, the Aboyade Technical Committee of 1977, and the Okigbo Presidential Commission of 1980. These Commissions recommended the application of various principles ranging from derivation, to even development, need, population and national interest [40]. It was further stressed that, the principle of derivation has by far, had the greatest influence on revenue allocation system in Nigeria. Thus, it took center stage and was largely applied at the time when cocoa and groundnuts were the chief export earnings in Nigeria, and the then Northern and Western regions benefitted immensely from it in the 1950s and 1960s. For instance, communities in the Niger Delta are quick to point out that the various regional governments where these products were produced controlled the income from their exports. However, since oil, produced in the land of ethnic minorities became the main export income earner; reverse turned out to be the case, as the wealth is being controlled by the federal government dominated by the major ethnic groups. Thus, prior to oil, revenue sharing formula that adopted derivation principle, paid regions from where applicable resources were

sourced 50% of the total revenue generated [32]. This was however short-lived as the derivation principle was though retained but applicable percentage kept dropping in the following sequence. It changed from 50% to 25% between 1968-1980 and to 1.5% between 1980-1989 when oil became the major revenue earner [32,40,41].

Therefore, one recurrent decimal in the revenue sharing equation is that the federal government has continued to alter the principle of derivation, even as the government continues to device extra-legal ways to short-change the oil producing states [42]. This was described as distributive injustice, and was identified among the main cause of the Niger Delta crisis [43]. Based on this, it can be concluded that politics that followed and later came to be known as the politics of revenue sharing formula is seen by many as direct war between majority ethnic groups and the minority ethnic groups most especially, the Niger Delta people where the oil wealth is generated [38].

## 2.5 Elite Corruption in the Niger Delta

Corruption in all its extension and ramifications remains the bane of security and development crisis in the Niger Delta region. The resources meant for development are stolen by the local elites in the Niger Delta for private use leaving the people to wallow in abject poverty and misery [44]. If not, where are the increased financial allocations to the Niger Delta states going? This question becomes important in view of the stupendous riches of the Niger Delta Governors. The leaders continue to milk the treasury dry that nothing concrete is on the ground. Thus, the Niger Delta leaders are as culpable as forces outside the oil communities such as the Nigerian state and the oil companies [45]. Thus, in analyzing poverty and infrastructure deficit in the Niger Delta, the whole blame cannot be heaped on the federal government as the federal government through its various interventionist programmes, bemoaned a situation in which monies are regularly and continually being allocated to the Niger Delta states under ecological, derivation and other special grants and such allocations do not translate into concrete development. This is not to say that the federal government and then IOCs are free from culpability in the Niger Delta imbroglio [45].

Buttressing this, Africa Independent Television (AIT) Documentary of Wednesday

13<sup>th</sup> September, 2017 revealed that Rivers state received over 1.3 trillion naira, while Delta received over 1 trillion naira from the federal government since 1999, but these funds could not be translated into concrete development.

Emphasizing this, analysts stressed that most of the governments in the Niger Delta have been largely predatory and annexationist, looting and pillaging the resources of the people. They maintained that before the Fourth Republic, barely five percent of the federal allocations were going to the Niger Delta. Since 1999, these allocations have been increased to thirteen (13) percent. Sadly, the plight of the people in terms of employment, decayed infrastructure, poor housing, lack of access to education and medical care have remained largely the same if not worse than before the commencement of the Fourth Republic [44]. Thus, the issues of profound profligacy, staggering looting of treasuries, outright pillage, stealing and mal-administration are at the heart of the worsening retrogression and penury in the zone. The region has been ruled by leaders like James Ibori, late Diepreye Alamieseigha, Lucky Igbenedion, Peter Odili and others who were accused of massive corruption by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). It is pertinent to note that; James Ibori has been reported to have laundered over 15 million dollars and was jailed in Britain, even though he escaped justice in Nigeria. Again, late Alamieseigha escaped arrest in a dramatic way from Britain and up until his death; he was on Britain's wanted list because of alleged economic crimes by him while in office as the Governor of Bayelsa State [44]. Therefore, corruption by the local elites remains the bane of development in the Niger Delta. These have generated reactions from the youths because the government has not risen up to expectation in meeting their yearnings and aspirations, and these find expression in vandalism, kidnapping and general criminality in the Niger Delta with its attendant consequences on security and nation-building in Nigeria [24].

## 2.6 Nigerian Government's Initiatives to Foster Peace and Development in the Niger Delta Region

It is true that the environment of the Niger Delta poses a great challenge for development in the region. This was even recognized by the colonial authorities who graciously setup the Sir Henry Willink Commission to suggest ways and to make far-reaching recommendations of

ameliorating the sufferings of the people of the region. This was necessary because the area was highly underdeveloped and therefore, deserved special attention in terms of poverty alleviation in order to reposition the area on the path of sustainable growth and development. It is noteworthy that these challenges preceded the advent of oil production in Nigeria [32].

However, the recommendations of the Willink's Commission brought into being the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961, with the fundamental objectives of transforming the Niger Delta region by ensuring that the socio-economic conditions of the people improve for the better. Unfortunately, the performance of the Commission fell below expectation as it could not meet the yearnings and aspirations of the people. NDDDB failed to engender autocentric development necessary to extricate the region and the people from the chains of underdevelopment because the NDDDB lacked executive power and was underfunded [46]. Therefore, the objectives for which the Commission was established to achieve were not met, making the people to continue to agitate for development. However, the federal government in 1976 went ahead to establish the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority which was politicized by the federal government [46]. All these initiatives could not address the yearnings of the Niger Delta people.

Furthermore, the appalling and debilitating development conditions of the oil producing areas in the Niger Delta triggered the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida to intervene in the Niger Delta development crisis, and the regime to committed 1.5 percent of fund from the Federation Account for the development of the Niger Delta, and later established Presidential Committee for the development of oil producing communities, which did not do much in bringing about meaningful changes in the region despite the enormous resources committed to help the Committee achieve its objectives due to nepotism, naivety and lack of clear goals. At the end of the Committee's existence, a total of 1,207 projects were abandoned or on-going [46].

However, in 1992, Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission OMPADEC came into being. OMPADEC created by Decree 23 of 1992 came to be the major development intervention agency for the development of the Niger Delta. The objectives of OMPADEC were as follows:

1. The rehabilitation and development of oil producing areas,
2. The tackling of ecological problems that have arisen from the exploration and exploitation of oil minerals,
3. To identify the actual oil producing areas and embark upon the development of projects properly agreed on with the local communities of oil producing areas, and to
4. Tackle problems of oil pollution [46].

It is important to note that many activists in the Niger Delta as usual, saw OMPADEC as a scam. An activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa was quoted as saying: "OMPADEC is illogical, an insult and an injury. "If you have your own money, why should government set up a Commission to run your money? They are treating us like babies here...OMPADEC is designed to bait us and destroy our will to resist injustice" [47].

However, OMPADEC was created to be funded by 3% derivation principle fund with the aim of directing the derivation fund for the specific development of the oil producing communities. This was against the background of neglect and marginalization suffered by oil producing communities like Oloibiri in the previous dispensations. OMPADEC also failed to actualize the development aspirations of the oil producing Niger Delta region. The Commission was entangled by structural defects, financial imprudence, contract proliferation and general lack of good will from Nigerian elites, faulty project ideas, maladministration, nepotism and faults in implementation strategy. Therefore, OMPADEC squandered so much resource and failed to accomplish any project of worth as a result of corruption [46]. Suffice it to say that, such evidence of lack of commitment has made it possible for the people of the Niger Delta to continually blame the federal government for lack of commitment to address the developmental challenges of the Niger Delta.

However, the democratic government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 2000, set up the Niger Delta Development Commission NDDC and was seen as the panacea for the restiveness in the oil producing region. The Commission was set up with mandate to ensure sustainable development and economic prosperity of the oil communities in the nine states of the Niger Delta region. The Commission is expected to be funded as follows: Federal government contribution of equivalent of 15% of monthly statutory allocation due to the Niger Delta states, 3% of total budgets of oil and



gas producing companies, 50% of ecological funds due to Niger Delta states, aid etc [46]. Though the NNDC has a lofty mandate and good funding mechanism, it has equally failed to address the fundamental issues of exclusion, marginalization, neglect and deprivation in the region. This is simply because the Commission is the most lucrative in the country, and it is being used by the political elite to reward cronies, which fostered corruption [46,48].

It is therefore, not surprising that the corrupt characteristics of the erstwhile intervention agencies have rubbed off more viciously on NDDC as it was allegation of corruption that led to the indefinite suspension of former Managing Director of NDDC Mr. Godwin Omene. Also former NDDC Chairman Mr. Sam Edem was dismissed on corruption grounds as well. Today, the acting Managing Director, Professor Kemebradikumo Pondei pretended to slump before the National Assembly members when he was unable to defend fraud allegation running into 81.5 billion naira in NDDC [49,50]. All these militate against the success of NDDC and frustrate the development of the Niger Delta.

Finally, as part of the commitment of the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to resolve the development crisis in the Niger Delta, the federal government created the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs in September 2008, to look into the grievances of the people and to bring about peace and development in the region [11]. Also, the administration of Yar'Adua offered Amnesty to militants in the Niger Delta, urging them to embrace peace, submit their arms and ammunition in exchange for Amnesty. The Amnesty Programme was an all-embracing exercise across the three tiers of government in the region. The federal government then in its effort to ensure the success of the Amnesty designed various programmes for the militants to identify those who are employable and trainable with a view to rehabilitating and reintegrating them into the society so as to contribute to the development of the society [15]. Amnesty for a while had made the guns fall silent in the Niger Delta, but today there is resurgence of militancy which is a source of concern to the Nigerian state. This is to say that the Niger Delta crisis has not been resolved. The fundamental issues have not been addressed as the government only engaged in window dressing and addressing the symptomatic and not the causative issues in the Niger Delta crisis.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Sources of Data

The needed primary data were collected directly on the field from the sampled states of Bayelsa and Rivers states, through the use of a well-structured questionnaire, focus group discussion and in-depth interview from a wider study in 2017. The total number of questionnaires administered was 400 while the total number of questionnaires returned was 309. Furthermore, eleven (11) interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders. Finally, five (5) focus group discussions FGDs were conducted in different locations in Bayelsa and Rivers states. The secondary data on the other hand were obtained from journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, internet materials, seminar papers and articles relevant to the study.

### 4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

This study utilized simple percentage and charts to make representations for easy comprehension. However, the analysis of the questionnaires administered, the interviews and focus group discussions conducted in the research setting were presented below.

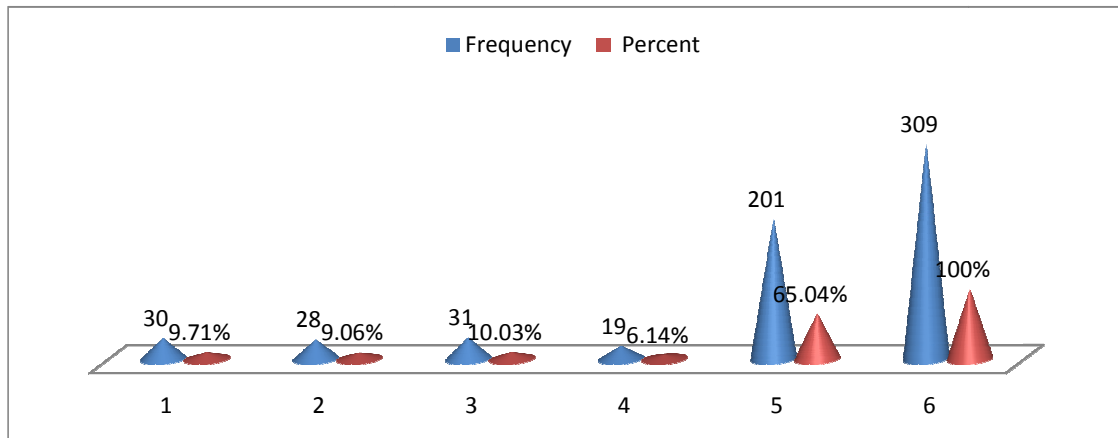
##### 4.1.1 Research question 1: What roles have the government and the international oil companies played in generating and sustaining national security crisis in the Niger Delta?

Table 1 and Fig. 1 show 30 respondents representing 9.71% believed that government and oil company's inability to carry the people along in oil production causes crisis in the region, 28 respondents representing 9.06% posited that government and oil company's divide and rule tactics in oil producing communities has caused lots of unease, 31 respondents representing 10.03% believed that lack of genuine concern to develop the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region by the government and oil companies is at the heart of the crisis, 19 respondents representing 6.14% opined that human rights violations and abuses by the government's security forces in the Niger Delta triggers crisis and 201 respondents representing 65.04% posited that the government and IOCs contributed to the ongoing crisis through all of the responses above.

**Table 1. Respondent’s opinion on the roles the government and the international oil companies played in generating and sustaining national security crisis in the Niger Delta**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Government and Oil company’s inability to carry the people along in oil production	30	9.71
Government and Oil company’s divide and rule tactics in oil producing communities	28	9.06
Lack of genuine concern to develop the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region by the government and oil companies	31	10.03
Human rights violations and abuses by the government’s security forces in the Niger Delta	19	6.14
All of the above	201	65.04
Total	309	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2017)



**Fig. 1. Respondent’s opinion on the roles the government and the international oil companies played in generating and sustaining national security crisis in the Niger Delta**

One of the Key Informant Interviewees (KII, 2017) concurred that once calmed and serene environment has today been reduced to a devastated one because of the activities of oil companies that drill oil. “They do not care about the hosts’ communities and their economic activities. All the oil companies are interested in is to drill oil. They do not have a realistic plan to clean up the environment which they have destroyed due to oil spillage which is commonplace in different oil producing communities and the Niger Delta at large. Keep your vehicle for one week outside without covering it; the colour would change as a result of soot coming from gas flaring sites. You can see our walls and our roofs; everything has turned black as a result of gas flaring in our environment. It is most unfortunate that the government of Nigeria cannot stop this (KII, 2017)”.

Therefore, finding suggests that government and IOCs as major stakeholders in oil production are not free from culpability in the on-going crisis in the Niger Delta. Again, another (KII, 2017) supported this position and did not mince words when he argued that:

Nigeria is not the only country that produces oil. There are other countries of the world that produce oil but Nigeria’s case has always been different; because of Nigeria’s value system. We (Nigerians) do not have value for life and the environment. Nigerian state is more interested in the oil resources than the human beings that live around; they are more interested in the wealth, gotten from the environment than the people and the environment. For example, in other climes like the U.S, the government values life more than the wealth because it is the life that produces the wealth. The Nigerian state is ready to crush any opposition to oil production, and the state does not tolerate

dissenting voices clamoring for better environment and living condition in the Niger Delta. Therefore, the poor handling of these issues are what we are seeing today because over the years, there has not been any serious political will to nib the crisis in the bud.

From the foregoing analysis, two fundamental issues can be deduced from these submissions which have to do with the inability of the government and the IOCs operating in the region to protect the environment and to alleviate poverty in the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta.

Lamenting this situation (Kil, 2017) stated that:

As one can perceive, this community (Ekrikana-Ama in Okrika LGA of Rivers state) smells as a result of the toxics being released from the refinery. This gutter ("smelling gutter") was constructed from the refinery through this community down to the river. The pollutants cause severe illnesses to the inhabitants of this community because of the toxics the people inhale. If you go down to the river, the fishes there are not edible because of the chemicals the refinery

has been releasing. Anyone that tries eating such fishes does so at his or her peril. We are staying here because we have nowhere to go and this is our ancestral land.

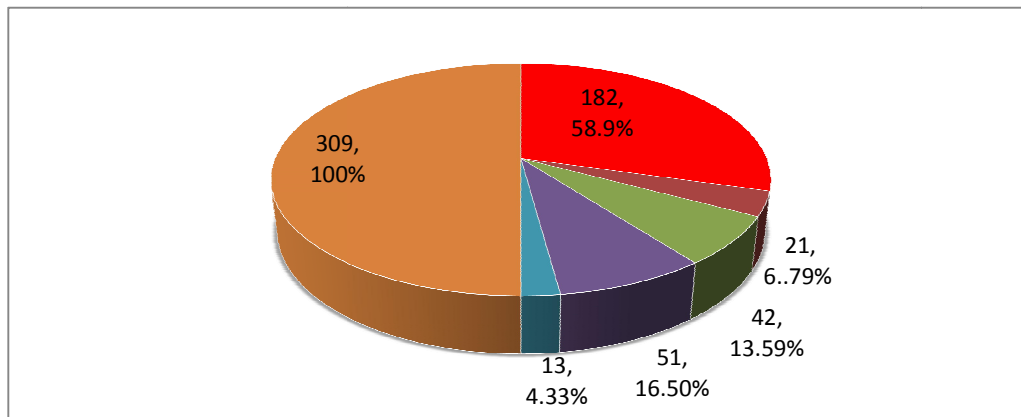
**4.1.2 Research question 2: Why does the Niger Delta crisis fester and linger for too long?**

Table 2 and Fig. 2 show 21 respondents representing 6.79% opined that absence of trust by the various stakeholders is the reason why the crisis lingers, 42 respondents representing 13.59% opined that lack of holistic approach in addressing the crisis is at the heart of the issue, 51 respondents representing 16.50% believed that lack of commitment by international oil companies/government to address environmental issues in the Niger Delta, 13 respondents representing 4.33% posited that unending demands by the oil producing communities on the government and international oil companies is why the crisis continues unabated, while 182 respondents representing 58.89% opined that lack of political will by successive administrations is the fundamental reason why the crisis festers and lingers for too long.

**Table 2. Respondent’s opinion on why the Niger Delta crisis festers and lingers for too long**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of political will by successive administrations	182	58.89
Absence of trust by the various stakeholders	21	6.79
Lack of holistic approach in addressing the crisis	42	13.59
Lack of commitment by international oil companies/government to address environmental issues	51	16.50
Unending demands by the oil producing communities on the government and international oil companies	13	4.33
Total	309	100

Source: Field Work, (2017)



**Fig. 2. Respondent’s opinion on why the Niger Delta crisis festers and lingers for too long**

However, (KII, 2017) subscribed to above view and contended that the land which the people depended on for cultivation of crops prior to the discovery of oil are scarce today due to the fact that the government gave them away to oil companies and the inhabitants of the oil producing communities have nothing to hold onto. In fact, the people are now tenants on their own land. “Look at the expanse of land used in building the refineries, NLNG plants and staff quarters across various oil producing communities in the Niger Delta. Were they not people’s farmlands? Today, we have nothing to show for it other than pollution, poverty and unemployment. Is this how it is done in other climes? The Nigerian state must change its land policy by giving people back their lands if we want enduring peace in the Niger Delta and by extension, Nigeria”.

Therefore, the inability to access land for agricultural purposes, and general underdevelopment in oil producing communities have generated reactions from the people because the government has not risen up to

expectation in meeting their yearnings and aspirations.

**4.1.3 Research question 3: Whose interest(s) the crisis in the Niger Delta is serving?**

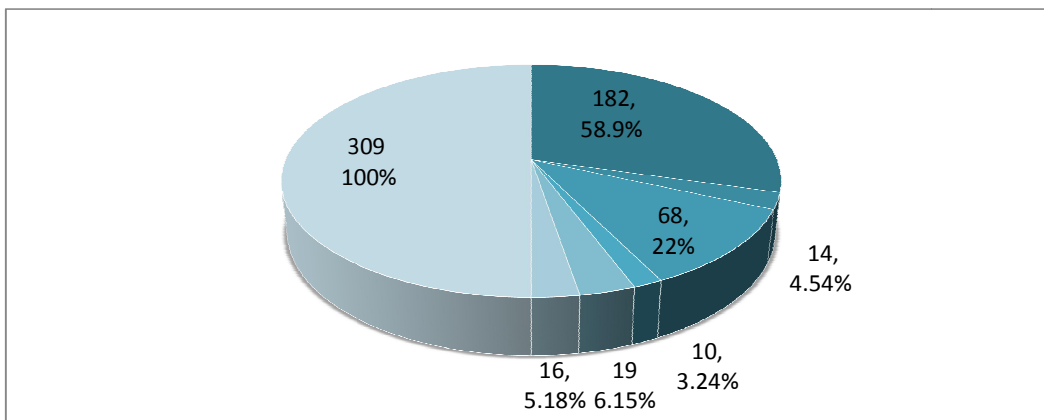
Table 3 and Fig. 3 show 182 respondents representing 58.89% believed that the crisis is serving the elites, 14 respondents representing 4.54% maintained that it is the Nigerian government that is benefitting from it, 68 respondents representing 22.0% believed that militants are the ones making gains from the crisis, 10 respondents representing 3.24% opined that the oil producing communities themselves profit from the crisis, 19 respondents representing 6.15% believed that IOCs are making gains from it, while 16 respondents representing 5.18% believed that all the stakeholders benefit one way or the other from the crisis.

However, (KII, 2017) revealed that the Niger Delta crisis is serving a lot of interests. These interests include the elites, the international oil corporations, the militants and oil producing communities. Analyzing this, elites are those who

**Table 3. Respondent’s opinion on the interest(s) the crisis in the Niger Delta is serving**

Response	Frequency	Percent
The elites	182	58.89
The Nigerian government	14	4.54
Militants	68	22.00
Oil producing communities	10	3.24
international oil companies	19	6.15
All of the above	16	5.18
Total	309	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2017)



**Fig. 3. Respondent’s opinion on the interest(s) the crisis in the Niger Delta is serving**

occupy Niger Delta Ministry, NDDC as well as execute contracts in the Niger Delta region. Oil companies on their part through their pay offs to pro-company groups, elites, militias and Chiefs etc fuel conflicts in the Niger Delta. Such pay offs have either been the object of conflicts or division within and between communities which generates bad blood. Also, some of it has ended up for the payment for arms to unleash further violence in oil bearing communities, thereby hiding under the guise of insecurity to renege on their corporate social responsibilities.

Nevertheless, the oil producing communities steal and refine oil for sale and their consumption. Supporting this view, it was argued that one does not have to snoop around the communities to find tell-tale signs of oil theft. They are all too impossible to miss; everything is flung out in the open. Therefore, the oilbearing communities themselves are complicit in the trade as it provided employment for them. In Okrika LGA for instance, this phenomenon is called “Kpo Fire” (bunkering and local refining) which is a lucrative business of the day by the community youths. Put succinctly: “Kpo Fire” is the act of stealing and refining of crude oil by predominantly, indigenes of oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta. Stolen crude oil either from the pipelines or those illegally mined from the ground at their backyards is allowed to undergo certain degree of heat using locally constructed tanks and drums in refining the oil for sale. In the light of the above, these interests would not want the resolution of the crisis because they will not be patronized.

**4.1.4 Research question 4: Have interventionist’s agencies like OMPADEC, NDDC contributed to the development of the Niger Delta?**

Table 4 and Fig. 4 show that 61 respondents representing 19.74% strongly agreed that these agencies engendered development in the area. 14 respondents representing 4.95% agreed to the developmental drive of these agencies. However, 111 respondents representing 35.92% strongly disagreed and 108 respondents representing 34.95% disagreed that interventionist’s agencies like OMPADEC, NDDC and Ministry of Niger Delta have contributed to the Development of the Niger Delta given the enormous resources accruing to them over the years, while 15 respondents representing 4.85% were undecided.

**Table 4. Respondent’s opinion on interventionist’s Agencies like OMPADEC, NDDC and their Contributions to the Development of the Niger Delta**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	61	19.74
Agree	14	4.58
Strongly disagree	111	35.92
Disagree	108	34.95
Undecided	15	4.85
Total	309	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2017)

**4.1.5 Research question 5: To what extent is the Niger Delta crisis a challenge to Nigerian state and national security?**

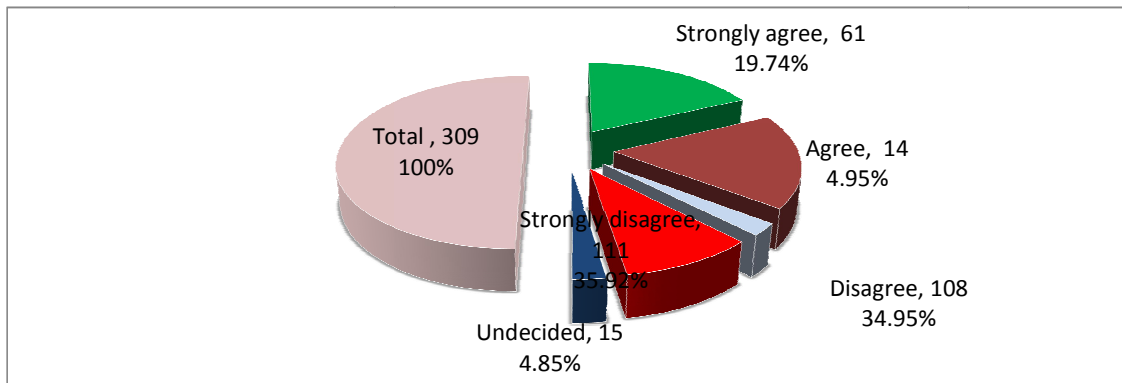
Table 5 and Fig. 5 show 205 respondents representing 66.34% strongly agreed that Niger Delta crisis is a fundamental threat to national security. 81 respondents representing 26.21% merely agreed, 3 respondents representing 0.01% strongly disagreed, 6 respondents representing 1.94% disagreed and 14 respondents representing 4.53% were undecided. In all 92.55% agreed (strongly and merely). This implies that Niger Delta crisis is a fundamental threat to national security in Nigeria.

However, (KII, 2017) submitted that since the 1990s, there has always been confrontation between the government security forces and the militants leading to the destruction of lives and properties. Prior to the Amnesty Programme of 2009, the government and the oil companies have suffered serious loses arising from the activities of militants who are bent on crippling the oil industry in Nigeria. However, militants have resorted to pipeline vandalism, kidnapping of oil expatriates and killings, which affected oil production and government revenue. Their activities had far-reaching security implications for the corporate existence of Nigeria.

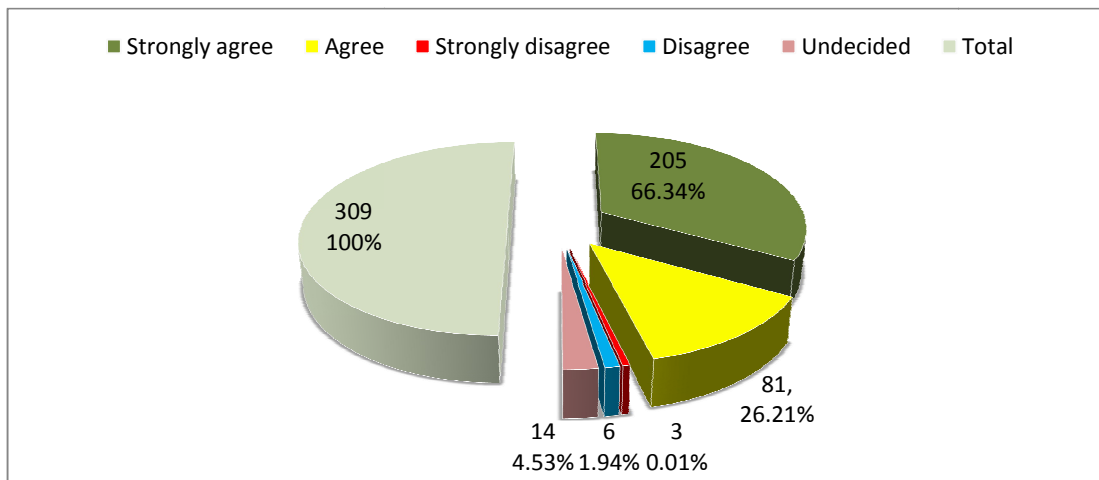
**Table 5. Respondent’s opinion on the extent Niger Delta crisis is a challenge to Nigerian state and national security**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	205	66.34
Agree	81	26.21
Strongly disagree	3	0.01
Disagree	6	1.94
Undecided	14	4.53
Total	309	100

Source: Field Work, (2017)



**Fig. 4. Respondent's opinion on interventionist's Agencies like OMPADEC, NDDC and their contributions to the development of the Niger Delta**



**Fig. 5. Respondent's opinion on the extent Niger Delta crisis is a challenge to Nigerian state and national security**

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is an indisputable fact that the Niger Delta crisis has a very long standing history. The crisis predated the discovery of oil in the region, as the difficult terrain of the area characterized by swamps, innumerable creeks and rivulets made the development of critical infrastructure for descent living, a very difficult challenge. The Niger Delta region being a low land had been prone to flood disasters, which in some cases, uprooted the entire community from their ancestral homes to higher and safer grounds.

However, the development challenges of the Niger Delta drew the attention of the colonial government in Nigeria and the Queen of England recognized the need to engender development in

the area, which had been a major source of revenue to the colonial administration given the quantum of palm oil produced in the region. These realities brought into existence the Sir Henry Willink Commission in 1958 whose recommendations led to the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), saddled with the responsibilities of assessing the needs of the people of the area, so as to fashion out best ways possible to stimulate the kind of development the people yearned for, in order to allay their fears as minorities in a federal arrangement which the people considered skewed in favour of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is pertinent to note that NDDDB did not achieve much in repositioning the region for sustainable growth and development. Some attributed the failure of the Commission to the fact that the colonial administration lacked the

political will to implement the recommendations of the Commission, while others posited that colonialism in itself was not a development mission, but a system of economic exploitation, political domination by dint of force, for the benefit of the colonizers which kept development at bay. In a nutshell however, Sir Henry Willink Commission did not live up to expectation.

Nevertheless, with the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in 1956, the development conditions in the Niger Delta became a double jeopardy. Oil production generated new forms of development challenges associated with oil exploration and exploitation. Environmental pollution and degradation became commonplace in the region destroying flora and fauna, as well as means of livelihoods. Pollutants were released to water bodies, killing aquatic animals and generally affecting traditional occupation of the people such as fishing and farming. Therefore, once pristine environment turned out to be a devastating one, threatening the lives of the inhabitants of the region, a phenomenon which continually set the people against the international oil companies and the federal government of Nigeria which is the major collector of oil rent from the Niger Delta.

With enormous revenue generated by the Nigeria government from oil and the seemingly lack of commitment by the Nigerian state to confront the stark realities of poverty and environmental challenges, the oil producing communities started agitating for a better living condition from the federal government of Nigeria. Through the passage of time, the agitation in the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta took a violent dimension threatening the security of lives and properties and oil production in the region, which is considered as the fulcrum of the Nigerian economy. Therefore, to pacify the people, the federal government of Nigeria started creating one Commission after another with the objectives of championing the development of the region.

There was the Presidential Committee and later the Oil Mineral Development Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). This Commission did not achieve much due to massive corruption. With the return of democratic government in 1999, the then President Olusegun Obasanjo in the year 2000, created the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), followed by the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry in 2008, and the granting of Amnesty to the militants by the government of Late President Umaru Musa

Yar'Adua in 2009. It is noteworthy that Presidential Amnesty Programme had introduced relative peace in the Niger Delta, as the Programme made the guns to fall silent in the region, and the destructions of oil installations and kidnapping of oil expatriates almost non-existent, the Amnesty Programme has not changed the fundamental development issues in the region.

Therefore, despite the creation of these commissions, the grievances of the people still rage as the inhabitants of the region that made Nigeria to have the second largest Gross Domestic Product GDP in the continent believed that these gestures by the federal government over the years were merely tokenism. Fundamental development questions associated with poverty reduction, land rights, environmental remediation, increase revenue allocation, stamping corruption out of the oil sector, youth empowerment and the building of critical infrastructure connecting communities in the Niger Delta have not been addressed by the Nigeria state. This make the quest for genuine peace in the Niger Delta a very herculean task thereby, frustrating the Nigerian state from realizing her full potential in oil production due to insecurity in the Niger Delta as a result of the activities of militant groups. However, to leverage on the minimal gains of the Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta, and to ensure enduring peace in the Niger Delta, the following recommendations become necessary.

First, the government and the international oil companies operating in the Niger Delta should initiate genuine and constructive engagement with the inhabitants of the oil producing communities. The people must be considered as major stakeholders in oil production in their domain. This will build trust so long as the interests of the people are considered.

Secondly, the government should be humane and review the petroleum related Acts that reduced the people of oil bearing communities to squatters on their ancestral lands. A win-win model should be adopted in dealing with the people most especially as it relates to land ownership to allay the fears of the people whose land had been taken away, and has engendered poverty due to shortages of land for agricultural purposes in favour of oil exploration and exploitation.

Thirdly, NDDC should be scrapped and the federal government should directly intervene in

the development of the Niger Delta. NDDC is a conduit pipe for primitive accumulation by the elites. The Commission is one of the most lucrative government Commissions in Nigeria which is used for political settlement of cronies by the ruling and governing elites. The people do not really feel the impact of the Commission in terms of the development of critical infrastructure; rather, the Commission has thousands of uncompleted and abandoned projects which constitute a serious waste of resources in the Niger Delta.

Furthermore, the Nigerian government should make laws that would compel all IOCs operating in the Niger Delta to maintain global standards in oil production and to ensure that the IOCs take their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) very seriously. International oil companies IOCs must be made to clean up oil producing environments polluted by oil production and mining which is responsible for some devastating illnesses which affect the well-being of the oil bearing communities. Each of the oil company operating in the region should be made to build Liquefied Natural Gas LNG plant. This will create more jobs for the restive unemployed youths of the Niger Delta and by extension, the Nigerian youths who are used as pawns in the political chess board of politicians as thugs with all the security implications on the Niger Delta nay Nigeria.

Again, The Petroleum Information Bill (PIB) that is before the National Assembly is one major oil sector bill that will address a lot of challenges in oil production in the Niger Delta. Therefore, the government should expedite action to pass the bill into law, with the hope that the law will make all the stakeholders to sit up and live up to their responsibilities in oil production with the view to ensuring peace and development in the Niger Delta.

Additionally, derivation in revenue allocation formula should be reviewed upward, and proper monitoring mechanism should be put in place to ensure that revenues are used for the purpose intended. This will calm nerves and build trust and confidence between the oil bearing communities and the federal government which the people believed, has short-changed and marginalized them since oil wealth derived from the Niger Delta came to be the major source of revenue earner in Nigeria.

Above all, the Nigerian government should do everything possible to ensure that the East-West road is completed to give the people some level of respite. The road is critical to the development of the Niger Delta as it links the region to the South-West geo-political zone of the country. This road has received budgetary allocations severally but the will to complete it is lacking. If these recommendations are taken seriously, they will go a long way in addressing fundamental issues in the Niger Delta crisis thereby enhancing security, oil production in the Niger Delta and national development in Nigeria.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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