

**Enugu State University  
of Science & Technology**  
Journal of Social Sciences  
& Humanities



**Journal of Social Sciences**

**Editor-In-Chief**

**Prof. Oby Omeje**

**Managing Editor**

**Barnabas E. Nwankwo, Ph.D**

**Associate Editor**

**Nicholas Attamah, Ph.D**

**published by**

**Faculty of Social Sciences**

**Enugu State University of Science & Technology**

**[www.esutjss.com](http://www.esutjss.com)**

## **A Qualitative Insight into Oil Spill Conflicts in the Niger-Delta Region; The Case of Ilaje Community in Ondo State, Nigeria**

**Etta, Oyen Etta**

Department of Sociology  
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria  
tayen80@yahoo.com

&

**Aigbe, Diyeli Segun**

Department of Sociology  
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria  
stoba.security@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Oil spill conflicts within the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria reflect long-held feelings of exclusion, power inequalities and asymmetries that range from economic, social, cultural and political injustice. While many conflict resolution strategies have been designed and implemented in the Niger Delta region, the stark reality is that these schemes and programmes have not mitigated the crucial problems of communal conflict resulting from oil spillage. It therefore becomes necessary for peace and conflict scholars to provide empirical based insights into the dynamics of oil spill conflicts from community based perspectives in order to understand the peculiarities of each community within the Niger-Delta. Being that the inclusion of Ondo State within the Niger-Delta region has been debated to be more of a political gesture, than by its geography, not many oil spill related studies have been conducted in this area. This study is therefore conducted within this area in order to understand and compare previous findings from other core states within the Niger-Delta region. The study provides empirical evidence on oil spill conflicts and its contextual drivers within Ilaje Community of Ondo state. The study employed qualitative approaches (key informant interviews) for data collection and analysis. The data collected was subjected to content analysis in line with the study objectives. Extant discussion and suitable recommendations were provided based on the study outcomes.

Keywords: Conflicts, Environmental degradation, Niger Delta, Oil spill, Pollution

### **Introduction**

Oil activities are major sources of pollution that cause severe damages to the environment (Okpokwasili, 1996; Liu & Wirtz, 2005). This has been worsened by the oil companies' impunity of operations (Brooks, 1994); oil activities in the Niger Delta involved incessant oil spillages. For instance Shell's oil operations in Nigeria accounts for mere 14% of its production worldwide but account for over 40% of its oil spillages globally (Gilbert, 2010). Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) reported that from 1976 to 2005 over 4 million barrels of oil was spilled into the environment in over 9,000 incidents (Egberongbe et al., 2006; Emuedo, 2010). Some researchers have dismissed these figures, averring that actual figures are three times higher (Grevy, 1995; Banfield, 1998; Nassiter, 2010).

The oil-induced environmental dislocation in the Niger Delta not only erodes traditional livelihoods; it has also led to conflicts within communities, among communities

and between communities (Imobighe, 2004). The multidimensional conflicts are driven by extensive pollution of land and water by oil industry activities, government failure to develop the region and the attendant spread of immense poverty, inadequate compensation from oil companies, and violent actions of security forces and militant groups. In these conflicts, one of the main instruments of violence has been the marginalized and alienated youth groups in the region (Ukeje, 2001). The violent activities of the aggrieved youth have often provoked counter-violence of a more destructive nature from security forces (Onosode, 2003). These conflicts have not only undermined human security, but have hampered and stalled intended interventions to mitigate the oil spillage and its consequences.

Journalistic write-ups have documented incidents of oil-spill related violence in Ilaje area of Ondo state. In one on such cases, reported by Sahara Reporters (July 11, 2014), youth from the Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State accused the Oil giant, Chevron Nigeria Limited, of failing to implement the Global Memorandum of Understanding. At a protest held in Akure, the state capital, the aggrieved youths numbering in the hundreds, had marched over to the Governor's office along Alagbaka road. It was a dramatic display that featured the angry youth with placards bearing various inscriptions, chanting solidarity songs, and calling out the oil giant with unprintable names. The GMOU is an agreement reached jointly at paying a certain fee to the communities for the development of the area. Yet, Chevron had refused to fulfill its own part of the agreement that touched-off the large protest march. Leaders of the march had said Chevron Nigeria limited had deprived them much of their rights in their own land, by capitalizing on the unresolved rejection of a merger proposed for the oil communities in the area.

The vast revenues from oil have not made any appreciable impact on the oil-producing areas of the Niger Delta states. Rather the people experience micro-level paradox of penury amid immense oil wealth. Abject poverty, environmental degradation, marginalization, endemic conflict and social deprivation have taken a toll. The cumulative effects of these are anger in the land and easy predisposition of the population especially the youth to violence. The situation in the Niger Delta states has been at the core of extensive debate at the local, national, regional and international level. The debate centres on the overall impact of oil on Nigeria's political economy, social, economic and environmental issues attributed to oil in Nigeria (Obi, 2002; Ojo, 2002; Ukeje et al., 2002; Iwayemi, 2006). It reflects long-held feelings of exclusion, power inequalities and asymmetries that range from economic, social, cultural and political injustice. These indicators affect living standards of the present generation and the prospects of generations to come as they have direct bearing on the challenges of securing sustained human progress.

Beyond the immediate impacts of oil exploitation on the environment and the livelihood of host communities, scientific data on its long-term effects are beginning to emerge. While many poverty alleviation strategies have been designed and implemented in the Niger Delta region, the stark reality in the oil-bearing areas is that these schemes and programmes have not mitigated the crucial problems of social exclusion and human deprivation. It therefore becomes necessary for scholars in the field of peace and conflict studies to provide empirical based insights into the dynamics of the situations from community based perspectives in order to understand the peculiarities of each community within the Niger-Delta. Results from community based case studies will be helpful in proffering community-specific interventions for formulation and implementation, instead of adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to mitigate oil-spill conflicts and its attendant socio-economic consequences in communities within the Niger-Delta.

## Research Questions

In line with the study objectives, the following research questions are formulated to guide the direction of the study

1. How often is oil spillage experienced in Ilaje Area?
2. What are the causes of oil spillage in Ilaje Area?
3. What are the social consequences of oil spillage in Ilaje Area?
4. What forms of oil spill-related conflicts are experienced in Ilaje Area?
5. What are the social implications of oil spilled related conflicts in Ilaje Area?

## Research Methods

This study adopted a descriptive design in which primary data was gathered within a specific time frame. The study employed qualitative approaches for data collection and analysis. The focus was to examine the social implications of oil spill-related conflict in the Ilaje Area of Ondo State. Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State lies roughly between latitude 60001N and 6020I N and longitude 40451 E and 50451 E. Its approximate northern boundaries are around Ikale and Arogbo-Ijaw in the Okitipupa and Ese-Odo Local Government Areas of Ondo State. In the southern boundary is the Atlantic Ocean whereas it is bordered in the west by Ijebu in Ogun State, the eastern boundary is the Itsekiri land in Warri, Delta State. It has a coastline of about 180km thus making Ondo state, the state with the longest coastline in Nigeria. The major occupation of the Ilaje people are fishing, canon and boats building, commercial water transport, trading activities include mainly fishes, woven material, distilled locally made gin. The administrative nerve centre of Ilaje at Igbokoda is primarily mangrove swamp forest. Major rivers into which secondary water courses from swamp areas flow dominate the entire area. Crude oil is concentrated in the Ugbo subgroup area, while some communities in the Mahin and Aheri subgroups feel the impact of oil exploitation but are not oil producing.

The population for this study comprised community members of Ilaje Area, of Ondo State. The Ilaje area has a population of 290,615 according to the 2006 census; although the population can be said to have been under enumerated due to the riverine nature of the area, and lack of accessibility by road/land. Being a qualitative study, the sample size was limited to about 20 participants. Purposive sampling techniques based on specific eligibility criteria were used to select participants of the study. The participants comprised community leaders, youth group leaders and household heads within the study area. Key informant interviews were conducted among the participants of the study. The key informant interviews were conducted among 5 participants; three members of Actual Indigenous Concessional Eight-United Core Ultimate Major (AICECUM) and two political figures in the community. AICECUM, which is the umbrella body of all the core oil-producing areas of the Ugbo clan of Ilaje nation, along the 80-kilometer coastline of the state.

The interviews were based on a structured interview guide designed in line with the objectives of the study. The interview guide also included items that identify socio-demographic characteristics of the participants such as age, gender, work experience etc. Face validity of the interview guide was achieved through an evaluation by a committee of experts. Items that received unanimous acceptance were retained while items that seemed vague, complex or invalid for the study were removed. The data collected from the interview questions were subjected to content analysis in line with the objectives of the study. To begin the analysis, each question was analyzed to examine the unit of meaning. The meaning extrapolated from the sentences or phrases were compiled together with similar units and

clustered into categories. The units of data were used as the basis of the analysis of emergent themes. This procedure provided a contextual lens used to obtain valid answers to research questions.

## **EMERGENT THEMES**

### **Frequency of Oil Spillage in Ilaje Area of Ondo State**

The first research question sought to provide insight into the frequency of oil spillage in Ilaje Area of Ondo State. Based on the responses obtained from the participants, oil spillage within the area was a relatively regular occurrence and could be experienced as much as four times within a year. Within the Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State, Oil companies including Chevron, Agip, Exxon Mobil, Conoil, Express and Kavendish started exploring for crude oil when it was discovered in Ogorogo Village in 1968. The companies laid pipelines, established both onshore and offshore locations and dug canals. While doing this, their activities impacted negatively on the surrounding communities through oil spillage. Despite the impact, the oil companies refuse to conduct environmental impact assessment to ascertain the level of damage, and proceed to clean up the communities and pay due compensation to the locals.

*Oil spillage happens between three to four times in a year, although the spillage maybe minor or major. Major Oil spillage usually happens at dead of the night.*

MrOmoniberun; Member of the AICECUM

*To my best of knowledge, spillage happen 2-3 times in a year.*

Prince Omotoye; party leader in the ilaje LGA

*Spillage happens 3 times in a year at most cases*

- Mr Felix Koja; Former secretary of the AICECUM

*On an average oil spillage may happen 3 times in a year.*

- Mr. Ikuomola; Community leader of Ugbo Land

*Spillage do happen, but can't be more than four 4 times a year.*

- Apostle Odudu; Member of the AICECUM

Oil spillages in various communities within the Niger Delta Area abound in history and literature. Major oil spills in the coastal zone include the Forcado tank 6 Terminal in Delta state incident that spilled 570,000 barrels of oil into the Forcados estuary in July 1979, polluting the aquatic environment and surrounding swamp forest; the Funiwa No.5 Well in Funiwa Field that spilled an estimated 421,000 barrels of oil into the ocean from January 17 to January 30, 1980, destroying 836 acres of mangrove forest; and the Oshika village spillage in River state that spilled 5,000 barrels of oil in 1983, flooding the lake and swamp forest and causing high mortality in crabs, fish, and embryonic shrimp (Ordinioha & Brisibe 2013). While major spills have not plagued Nigeria recently, an average of 240,000 barrels of crude oil are spilled in the Niger delta every year, in large part due to unknown causes (31.85%), third party activity (20.74%), and mechanical failure (17.04%) (Isumonah, 2013). The spills have contaminated the Niger Delta regions water, air, and plants with trace metals that have accumulated in crops and harmful, potentially carcinogenic hydrocarbons such as polycyclic

aromatic hydrocarbon and benzo(a)pyrene, and naturally occurring radioactive materials (Omofonmwan&Odia,2009).

### **Drivers of Oil Spillage in Ilaje Area of Ondo State**

The second research question laid emphasis on the drivers of oil spillage in the study area. Responses obtained from the interview transcripts showed that the activities of the oil companies were the major causes of oil spills in the area. While carrying out their oil exploration and transportation activities, incidents such as equipment malfunction/breakdown, carelessness from equipment handlers, poor maintenance culture of equipment and use of dilapidated equipment were identified as being causes of oil spillage. Furthermore, the effects of natural phenomenon such as hurricanes and floods, which sometimes destroyed pipelines and other oil storage equipment, were also cited. Other drivers of oil spillage mentioned by some of the participants included deliberate acts of illegal oil bunkering and sabotage. Some of their verbatim responses are presented as follows;

*The drivers of oil spillage in the area are majorly; Mobile, COIN, SHELL, AGIP and CHEVRON, At most point due to it happen due to equipment breakdown, deliberate actions by people, being careless or mistakes from the users of those machines, if all this is not properly considered there will be oil spillage.*

MrOmoniberun; Member of the AICECUM

*The operators of the joint ventures between nnpic and multinational oil companies like Chevron, Shell, and Mobile are responsible for the spills as a result of lack of maintenance, deliberate acts by the people and dilapidated machines.*

- Prince Omotoye; party leader in the ilaje LGA

*Shell, Chevron, Mobile are majorly responsible for oil spills in the area due to equipment breakdown, natural disasters such as hurricanes especially during raining seasons and also lack of maintenance culture.*

- Mr.Koja; Former secretary of the AICECUM

*Information from him posits that Agrip, chevron , shell, coin, are majorly responsible for the spill in those area as a result of sabotage of illegal bunkers, and as a result of inability to properly manage and maintain their equipments.*

- Mr.Ikuomola; Community leader of Ugbo Land

*Well to me, Coin Agrip, shell, and Chevron are responsible for the spills. Oil spills are also as result of deliberate acts of oil bunkers or illegal oil bunkers, lack of equipments, and inability for proper maintenance.*

- Apostle Odudu; Member of the AICECUM

Many factors has been attributed as the causes of oil spillage in Niger-Delta region. Supporting some of the assertions made by participants in this study, Bienen (2005)

categorized drivers of oil spillage into natural and human causes. Natural causes of oil spills occur through natural disaster, movement of tectonic plates and also as a result of inadequate trap system. Oil spill can be caused by natural seepage, especially in the ocean, as tectonic plates shift, they may release oil from reserves trapped deep such as drilling beneath the ocean floor. On the other hand, human causes are manmade causes, usually done by humans. Examples include vandalization of oil pipe which could bring about spillage, carelessness on the side of both workers (this cause is what is referred to as operational), carelessness on the side of the tanker drivers (accidents can happen during delivery or production operations which can cause spillage), carelessness that could also lead to oil bunkering, sabotage and oil siphoning.

### **Social consequences of oil spillage in Ilaje Area of Ondo State**

The third research question dwelt on the socio-economic consequences of oil spillage in Ilaje Area of Ondo State. According to the respondents, in the event of an oil spillage, a chain reaction of negative consequences abound. Fishing nets and traps set in the creeks and streams for fishing are destroyed, accounting for losses worth several thousand of naira. The fishes in the rivers and streams also received a lethal dose of oil, which effectively expels or destroys the fish population. Fishes can no longer be caught in the shallow waters and the creeks have been invaded by salt water. Tidal waves also help to spread the oil quickly through the mangrove, destroying forests and soil in their wake. Species of fishes that were caught in the rivers and creeks have become extinct, moving further into the sea. Further, shrimp and crabs affected by oil spills have become inedible, even when smoked. One of the respondents complained about the adverse effect of oil pollution on their economic activities. According to him, shrimps and crabs that have been affected by the oil spills could not be sold. Smoking the shrimps and crabs did not make them edible. This resulted in a huge economic loss to fishermen. Further, farm animals such as cows reared by local farmers have been lost as a result of contaminated water drunk by these cows.

*Well, the consequences of this spills is that it distorts the ecology system, killing the aquatic animals. Many of the fish species common to our area are now extinct. Many of the fishes also migrate towards the sea, leaving the rivers and stream without fish.*

- Mr Omoniberun; Member of the AICECUM

*Well, it's important to let you know that there are environmental damage and devastation. The consequences is that, there will be alteration of ecology of the affected communities.*

- Prince Omotoye; party leader in the ilaje LGA

*Oil spillage destroys the ecosystem, and have great negative effect on farmland, which then lead to temporary most migration of people in the affected communities, because fishing and farming becomes practically impossible to engage in, People them have to seek a better live in neighboring communities.*

- Mr. Koja; Former secretary of the AICECUM

*The polluted waters becomes Unconsumable for humans and bring about damage to the ecology. Even smaller aquatic catch like crabs and shrimps are no more available for consumption as they become poisonous, if consumed by humans. Its also results into the death of farm animals and other farm produces.*

- Apostle Odudu; Member of the AICECUM

Various scholars have corroborated the consequences of oil spill to the marine ecosystem, as espoused by the participants of this study. Marine ecosystems are structured in complex ways by many interacting species, and an oil spill will have a different impact on each of them. Although each ecosystem is unique, previous oil spills suggest several key variables. The chemical composition and quantity of the oil to which organisms are exposed are important factors determining how populations will respond to spilled oil. Some biological traits make certain species more likely to be exposed to oil than others; particularly, the habitat/depth of the species. Under most circumstances, spilled oil will float along the surface of the water, thereby minimizing exposure of most subtidal species to oil. Notable exceptions include species with canopies that reach the surface of the water, such as some kelp and seagrass species. Marine mammal and bird species, which must regularly pass through the air-water interface to breathe, are particularly vulnerable to oil exposure (Peterson et al. 2003), whereas pelagic fish species will have minimal exposure to oil (Paine et al. 1996). In spill disasters in which the oil floats, the greatest exposure will occur in the intertidal zone, where rising and falling tides bring species in direct contact with the bulk of the spilled oil.

Consequences of the oil spill on human society including interrelated impacts on health of individuals, well-being of communities, and the economy have also been established in literature. Weblor and Lord (2010) provided taxonomies of processes, impacts, and vulnerabilities associated with human dimensions of oil spills. Broadly speaking, they noted that humans can be affected by oil spills in three major ways: oil can affect ecological processes that cause direct harm, e.g., health impacts from eating seafood with bio-accumulated oil toxins; oil spill stressors can change intermediary processes, e.g., economic impacts to fishers from oil spill impacts to fish; and stressors can directly harm humans, e.g., health impacts from breathing oil vapors. In terms of physical health, direct contact with crude oil, or indirect contact through, for example, inhalation of vapors or consumption of tainted seafood can cause deleterious health effects ranging from dizziness and nausea to certain types of cancers and issues with the central nervous system (Jenssen 1996, Davidson et al. 2005, Herrington et al. 2006, Rodríguez-Trigo et al. 2007, Jacques-Whitford 2008, Aguilera et al. 2010, Major and Wang 2012).

### **Oil spill-related conflicts in Ilaje Area of Ondo State**

The negative economic impact of oil exploitation has led to social and political unrest in the Niger Delta region. Based on the over-arching themes obtained from the interview transcripts, the oil producing areas is in a parlous state of development. Basic infrastructure of roads, housing, electricity, water, education, communication and health are very weakly developed relative to the wealth of the region. The pollution and increasing scarcity of renewable freshwater supplies also threatens human health and welfare. Another fallout from the negative environmental and economic effect is incessant intra and inter communal clashes, leading to a loss of lives and properties. These clashes are usually caused by

competition over ownership of land where oil wells are located, claims to oil companies' compensation, and contracts. Further, the neglect of the oil producing communities have often angered them resulting in their militant youths, venting their anger on oil companies personnel.

*Well, to be candid with you, oil spillage as a lot of diverse effects on the ilaje community, because both things on land and on sea becomes destroyed, it affects the usage of water in the area, because the water would have been contaminated which then make it not safe for use, trust me fishing and farming becomes absolutely impossible, which serves as the bedrock of the economy of the Ilajes. These problems have led to serious conflict between community members and oil companies*

- Mr. Ikuomola; Community leader of Ugbo Land

*There have been several violent protests and riots among youth and community groups over oil spillage and other oil related disputes with oil companies in the community.*

- Apostle Odudu; Member of the AICECUM

*The people are without access to clean drinking water, sanitation services, and are at risk from water borne diseases. There is also very rapid decay and deterioration of physical infrastructure and social amenities. This situation of poverty has led to various forms of agitation by community members who feel cheated by the government and the oil companies.*

Mr Omoniberun; Member of the AICECUM

Oil-related activities have led to environmental degradation that has not only engendered the decline of traditional economic activities in oil-bearing areas, but also led to a violent communal crisis, youth militancy, and the government and oil companies' brutal repression of protests and violent demonstration by the people of the Niger Delta (Babatunde, 2017). Conflict between the oil-producing communities and oil companies as many scholars had opined is traceable to the environmental degradation of the land and water on which the local communities depend for their sustenance. Communities discontent with the consequences of oil operations on their economy are expressed in various form ranging from peaceful protest and dialogue to violent demonstration against oil companies, blockages of their operation, sabotage of pipelines or other oil installation and hostage taking (HRW, 1999; Ukeje et al., 2002; Imobighe et al., 2002; Imobighe, 2004).

Similarly, Ogbogbo (2004) argued that the struggle by the local communities is primarily directed towards securing increased local participation in the oil business and adequate access to the oil revenues. Various ethnic militias have emerged in the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta to challenge the activities of the oil companies. The objective of these groups is the economic and political emancipation of the Niger Delta largely through ownership and control of its petroleum resources. Some of these groups or militias have produced charters, declaration, agendas and resolution to express their demands. These began with the Ogoni Bill of rights in 1990, the Kaiama Declaration by the Niger Delta youths, the Oron Bill of

rights by the Oron people of Akwa-Ibom States and Warri accord by the Itsekiri people of Delta State. All these charters and declarations contained various demands for resource control.

*To me, oil spilled related conflicts in Ilaje area is mainly due to disagreement between oil companies and community members. I remember one that happened in Parabe around 1998.*

Mr Omoniberun; Member of the AICECUM

Findings from the interview transcripts of this study showed that the relationship between the oil companies and the Ilaje community is more often characterized by suspicion, lack of trust, hostility and violence. Informants were unanimous in their opinion that oil companies are to blame for the lack of development in the areas. They accused the oil companies of creating division and disunity in the communities by manipulating local interest groups through divide and rule tactics. Oil companies do not provide employment opportunities, nor do they award scholarship to the youth of the communities. Further, the informants claimed that oil companies also fail to adequately respond to communities demand for entitlement in the form of compensation for oil spillages or other oil induced environmental degradation or employ members of the communities as contractors or labourers in their operations in these communities; oil companies are also accused of brutal repression of peaceful protest by communities against all the grievances highlighted above. A vivid example, which informants hyped on, was the Parabe incident of 1998 in which Chevron used security personnel to kill and maim youth of the communities protesting at its Parabe platform, off the Awoye coast.

### **Consequences of Oil Spill Related Conflict**

Various social implications of oil spill related conflict were identified by the respondents in this study. Some of the major themes on the effects of oil related conflicts on residents' socio economic life included; loss of properties, reduction in income, disruption of economic activities, displacement from farm/loss of farm, loss of employment, loss of lives, and retardation of community development. Others include relocation of business associates, loss of shops and goods, delaying execution of development projects and separation of families, destruction of social amenities. The implication is that the devastating effects of conflicts on the communities could constitute a major hindrance to the vitality of economic activities and sustainable development. Generally, it would be irrational for entrepreneurs to invest in a conflict prone area.

*It created disharmony between host communities and the oil majors/ operators and between host communities and their representatives on the other hand , and children education are badly affected , it also led to forceful displacements which then cause over population in some concentrated areas.*

- Apostle Odudu; Member of the AICECUM

*Firstly, the people's businesses are greatly affected to an extent that even the fishermen and farmers could not be buoyant to generate livelihood their families because their means of livelihood hood had been destroyed by the conflict and spill. Secondly, the will be scarcity of agricultural products in the*

*market, which would then lead to hunger and starvation. School system are also distorted as inhabitants are forced to migrate, the youths also engage in crimes and other social vices.*

- Mr. Ikuomola; Community leader of Ugbo Land

*The social services in such communities becomes bad and everyone to him or herself, no respect for elders as the youth are angry at the leaders for colluding with oil companies. Therefore everyone struggle to make a living either legal or illegal. Conflict and violence creates fear and insecurity in the communities. it leads to loss of property and life, serious housing problems, the schools are forced to close down.*

Mr Omoniberun; Member of the AICECUM

*It affect the social amenities like schools, health syatem, housing etc, it also result to serious health complications for the inhabitants. There are people who take advantage of protests and riots to break the law and commit crimes like burglary, rape, murder, unruly behaviour and so on.*

- Mr Koja; Former secretary of the AICECUM

Trends of responses obtained in this study conform to the submission of Ofuoku and Isife (2009) who reported that reduction in income, displacement of farmers from their land, loss of lives, arms running and loss of houses and properties were the common effects of community conflict. Wanyande (1997) argued that, whenever conflict occurs, the development of the society in most time is affected. Similarly, Gurr and Marshall (2003) argued that most African conflicts are caused by the combination of poverty and weak states and institutions and these had a devastating impact on development.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

Results obtained from this study have presented a community based perspective of how most conflicts directly related to oil exploitation stem from the protests of local communities against the ecological degradation and destruction of traditional means of livelihood of the people by activities of the multinational oil companies. This is often combined with a feeling of neglect triggered by the fact that usually only a very small portion of the oil revenue is re-invested in the oil producing areas while the lion's share of profits remain with the central government. While most protest in the oil producing areas are initially peaceful, they have the potential to turn into violent confrontation within and between communities and between oil companies and oil producing communities if the issues at stake are not adequately addressed. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered;

- The need to initiate realistic and pragmatic policies that will reduce or ameliorate the negative environmental impact of oil exploitation on the oil producing areas cannot be overemphasized. The solution lies in the adoption of "bottom-up" planning, which involves preparation of master plan and environmental impact assessment (EIA) at the

local level. The federal government and the oil industry should do a thorough clean-up and remediation of the environment of the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta which has been extensively degraded by oil exploitation activities by multinational oil companies. Policy consideration should identify a level of environmental use that is in some sense “sustainable” and consistent with preserving environmental capital. This can be achieved through the prevention of environment degradation, pollution remediation and biodiversity conservation and the vexed issue of compensation. The government must put an end to all environmental and human rights abuses in the Niger Delta.

- An integrated bottom-up participatory process that secures the quality of life of the people and their psychological health and simultaneously protects the environment is undoubtedly the pathway to peace and productive enterprise in the oil producing areas. Obviously, this will guarantee the economic empowerment of the people so that the people can better sustain themselves. The creation of a conducive social, economic and political environment is germane to the attainment of development in the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta. Youth empowerment schemes should be provided for the many agitated and qualified youth and adult alike. The youth should be motivated and mobilized for popular participation and for political, social and economic empowerments. Government must create an avenue for dialogue with the people of the Niger Delta in order to know their dreams, wishes and aspirations and what they believe should be their status in the Nigerian Nation.
- The oil and gas companies should establish an individual development fund which should be deployed to partner with oil producing communities to establish small and medium scale enterprises (SMES) using locally sourced materials. They should also build skills acquisition centres in strategic locations in the communities for capacity building. The people of the oil producing areas must be first beneficiaries of whatever resources are harnessed for their environment. The people deserve some form of compensation for the loss that accompanied the degradation of their environment.
- Oil companies should stop fuelling conflict in the oil producing communities through divide and rule tactics. Instead, they should adopt a more sympathetic understanding of the plight of oil communities. Perhaps the best way to achieve this is to present themselves as genuine partners-in-progress with their oil producing communities. This can be realised through regular dialogue with credible representative groups in each of the oil communities to determine the most efficient and feasible ways of meeting their needs. Where there is conflict between them and their host communities, oil companies should explore all peaceful avenues of conflict resolution and management.
- Oil companies should commit to corporate social responsibility that add tangible value to the operating environment and help fulfill critical development gaps. Promote good neighbourliness and help mutual co-existence with their host communities. Shun unscrupulous business practices and the abuse of the environment. Embrace consultative processes and popular participation in supporting community development. Assist in building institutions that support human development in oil producing communities, offer mentoring for the acquisition of productive skills and

grant appropriate scholarships to aid the development of critical industrial competence. Employment opportunities must be created for the youth. Studies have revealed that unemployment among the youth is underlying factors in their restiveness that inflames communal conflicts resulting in violence. All these would in the short and long term help to avert the bitter acrimonies of the recent past.

## References

- Aguilera, F., Méndez, J., Pásaro, E. & Laffon. B. (2010). Review on the effects of exposure to spilled oils on human health. *Journal of Applied Toxicology* 30(4):291-301
- Babatunde, A.O. (2017). Environmental Insecurity and Poverty in the Niger Delta: A Case of Ilaje. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 36-59
- Banfield, J. (1998). *The corporate responsibility debate*. African Business. Nov.
- Bienen L. (2005). Nigerian communities demand end to gas flaring. *Front Ecol Environ.* 3:299
- Davidson, C. I., Phalen, R. F. & Solomon. P. A. (2005). Airborne particulate matter and human health: a review. *Aerosol Science and Technology* 39(8):737-749
- Egberongbe, F. Nwilo P. & Badejo, O. (2006). *Oil Spill Disaster Monitoring Along Nigerian Coastline*. TS 16 – Disaster Preparedness and Management, Munich Germany
- Emuedo, C. O. (2010). Politics of Conflict Oilification and Petro-Violence in the Niger Delta. *Global Journal of Social Science.* 9(1):73-81
- Gilbert, L.D. (2010). Youth Militancy, Amnesty and Security in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. In V. Ojakorotu and L.D. Gilbert (ed.) *Checkmating the Resurgence of Oil Violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria* (pp. 51-70)
- Grevy, P. (1995). *The Niger Delta in Nigeria: A Pollution Assessment Study*. World Bank, Washington D.C.
- Herrington, P., G. Ball, & K. O'Halloran. (2006). *Aquatic ecotoxicity of cutback bitumen*. Land Transport New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand. [online] URL: <http://nzta.govt.nz/resources/research/reports/285/docs/285.pdf>
- Imobighe, T. A. (2004). "Conflict in the Niger Delta. A Unique Case or a Model for Future Conflicts in other Oil-producing Countries?" In: Rudolf TRAUB-MERZ[et al.] (eds.). *Oil Policy in the Gulf of Guinea: Security and Conflict, Economic Growth, Social Development*. Washington: Fredrich Ebert Stifting
- Iwayemi, A. (2006). "Nigeria's Oil Wealth: The Challenges of Sustainable Development in a Non-renewable Natural Resources Dependent Economy". The Postgraduate School, University of Ibadan, 31<sup>st</sup> Interdisciplinary research discourse.
- Jacques Whitford AXYS Ltd. (2008). Burrard Inlet environmental indicators report public consultation document. Burrard Inlet Environmental Action Program, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. [online] URL: [http://www.bieapfrempp.org/pdf/burrard\\_inlet\\_environmental\\_indicators\\_feb08.pdf](http://www.bieapfrempp.org/pdf/burrard_inlet_environmental_indicators_feb08.pdf)
- Jenssen, B. M. (1996). An overview of exposure to, and effects of, petroleum oil and organochlorine pollution in grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*). *Science of the Total Environment* 186:109-118
- Liu, X. & Wirtz, K.W. (2005). Sequential negotiation in multi-agent systems of oils, spill Response decision-making. *Baseline/Marine Pollution Bulletin.* 50: 463-484

- Major, D. N., & H. Wang. (2012). How public health impact is addressed: a retrospective view on three different oil spills. *Toxicological and Environmental Chemistry* 94:442-467
- Nassiter, A. (2010). Far from Gulf, a spill scourge five decades old. *New York Times*, June 16, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/17/world/africa/17nigeria.html>
- Obi, C. (2004). "Globalization and Nigeria's Oil Industry Implications for Local Politics". In: Adigun A. B. [etal.] (eds.). *Nigeria's Struggle for Democracy and Good Governance*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Ofuoku, A.U. & Isife, B.I. (2009) Causes, effects and resolution of farmer-nomadic cattle herders conflict in Delta State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. 1(2) pp. 047-054
- Ogbogbo, C. B. N. (2004). "Niger Delta and the Resource Control Conflict 1960 – 1999". Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Ibadan
- Ojo, O. J. B. (2002). "The Niger Delta: Managing Resources and Conflicts". *Research Report 49*. Ibadan: Development and Policy Centre (DPC)
- Okpokwasili, G. C. (1996). Microbial degradation of petroleum by brackish water isolates in Nigeria Wetlands. In: T.V.I., Akpata and A. Okoli (Ed.) *The Nigerian man and the Biosphere*. (M.AB-5) National Committee, pp. 138-146
- Omofonmwan, S. I. & Odia, L. O. (2009): Oil Exploration and Conflict in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria. Kamla-Raj, *Journal of Human Ecology*, 26 (1), pp. 25 – 30.
- Onosode, G. (2003). *Environmental Issues and the Challenges of the Niger Delta: Perspectives from the Niger Delta. Environmental Survey Process*. Yaba: The CIBN Press Limited
- Ordinioha, B. & Brisibe, S. (2013): The Human Health Implications of Crude Oil Spills in the Niger Delta, Nigeria: An Interpretation of Published Studies. *Nigerian Medical Journal*, 54(1): 10-6
- Paine, R. T., J. L. Ruesink, A. Sun, E. L. Soulanille, M. J. Wonham, C. D. G. Harley, D. R. Brumbaugh, & D. L. Secord. (1996). Trouble on oiled waters: lessons from the Exxon Valdez oil spill. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 27:197-235.
- Peterson, C. H., S. D. Rice, J. W. Short, D. Esler, J. L. Bodkin, B.E. Ballachey, & D. B. Irons. (2003). Long-term ecosystem response to the Exxon Valdez oil spill. *Science* 302(5653):2082-2086
- Rodríguez-Trigo, G., J. P. Zock, and I. Isidro Montes. (2007). Health effects of exposure to oil spills. *Archivos de Bronconeumología*. 43(11), 628-635.
- Ukeje, C. (2001). "Youths Violence and the Collapse of Public Order in the Niger Delta of Nigeria". *Africa Development*, 26(2)
- Ukeje, C.; Odebuyi, A.; Sesay, A.; Aina, O. (2002). *Oil and Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta*. CEDCOMS Monograph Series No. 1. Ile-Ife: Centre for Development and Conflict Management Studies

Wanyande, P. (1997), *State Driven Conflict in the Greater Horn of Africa*, Revised Paper Presented at the USAID Organized workshop on Conflict in the Great Horn of Africa May 21-23, Methodist House: Nairobi.

Webler, T., and F. Lord. (2010). Planning for the human dimensions of oil spills and spill response. *Environmental Management*45, 723-738