

Oil and Development Deficit in Africa: The Failure of Intervention Agencies in Nigeria's Niger Delta

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Abstract

Oil no doubt has been an impetus for development in regions where oil revenues are judiciously appropriated to actualize general improvement in the standard of living of the people. This scenario is not widespread in Africa despite its abundance oil deposits. The paper argued that, oil has paradoxically become a curse rather than blessing to regions it is produced in Africa, especially Nigeria's Niger Delta region due to corruption and lack of political will, among others on the part of national government to efficiently and effectively promote development in the region. This becomes apparent when we consider the failure of development intervention agencies in Nigeria over the years to achieve the aim for which they have been established in the Niger Delta.

Keywords: Oil, Development, Niger Delta.

Introduction

Whereas oil has been a propellant of development in some regions of the world, the reverse is the case in some other regions, Africa not been an exception. But what do we mean by oil? Oil, petroleum or crude oil is a greasy liquid, with a unique and characteristic odor that is occurring naturally at the surface of the earth and at depth (Wallace and Good, 1950:3). Oil extraction involves the finding and removal of hydrocarbons by drilling deep into the earth, and it is a key part of the transformation (production) of a natural resource; oil and gas into energy fuels, which involves the search for, discovery and production of oil and gas. The downstream operations in the oil industry include; the refining processing, distribution and sales of petroleum products largely, fuels lubricants, gas and petrochemicals. Thus oil production is fundamentally about the commodification of an energy resource sold at the market, for profit.

Historically, the first commercial oil well was drilled in North-Western Pennsylvania (United States of America) in 1859, known as Drake Well (Middleton, 2007:6). And since then, oil has risen to become a dependable source of energy. By any standard, oil is the world's leading industry in size; it is probably, the only international industry that, concern every country. There are different varieties of crude oil and some of such varieties are: United States West Texas intermediate; North Sea Brent Blend; Algerian Saharan Blend; Indonesian Minas; Nigerian Bonny Light; Saudi Arabian Arab Light; Mexican Isthmus; Fatch from Dubai; Venezuelan Tia Suana Light and so on (Middleton, 2007:15). The general rule of thumb is that, the "lighter" and "sweeter" the oil, the more valuable it is. Oil is described as light, if it is very easy to refine. More so, crude oil varies greatly in appearance depending on its composition. It is usually black or dark brown (although it may be yellowish or even greenish).

Each petroleum variety has a unique mix of molecules, which defines its physical chemical properties like colour and viscosity. On the other hand, the term "Development" is a multi-dimensional concept. Hence, it has been interpreted to mean different things to different people, depending on their intellectual and ideological beliefs. A United Nations publication on Science and Technology for Development describes development as; the process of allowing and encouraging people to meet their own aspirations (Cited in Ibodje, 1998:153). Development is a process that improves on the quality of standard of living, measured with realization of higher levels of civilization (Ake 1996:125). Thus, development is a phenomenon that is centered on man and it revolves around man. A society develops when its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment (Rodney, 2009: 1-2).

Most importantly, development must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory towards a situation or condition of life considered as materially and spiritually “better” (Todaro and Smith 2003,16-17). The questions to ask about a country’s development are:

What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result “development” even if per capital income has soared (Seers, cited in Johnnie, 2005:105).

It is instructive to note that a mere increase in GNP or GDP without a critical consideration of the poverty and unemployment index, coupled with the degree of inequality cannot paint the real picture of development. Whereas the Liberal school of thought gives priority to the community output rather than the well being of the citizenry, the Marxist school contends that issues like production, distribution, freedom and social justices cannot be diverted from the mechanism governing systematic production, distribution and consumption. On that note, development is holistic in nature and seen as the ability of respective communities to control the productive forces of their environment for the purpose of solving the problems imposed on them by nature and by man (Okodudu, 1998:31). Development as a phenomenon is not a project, but a process. Specifically, development is only but a comparative term and ever changing and that there are generally accepted indices that are used to calibrate or ascertain the developmental nature of a place, region or country.

In this paper, therefore, certain research questions are pertinent. What is oil? What is development? What is the nexus between oil and development? What are the oil and development efforts in Nigeria’s Niger Delta? This paper find answers to these and many other questions. The major theme of this paper therefore, is to logically argue that Africa is suffering oil-development deficit, especially by considering the failure of intervention agencies in Nigeria’s Niger Delta. For a critical analysis of the subject matter, the paper is organized into four sections. The introduction is followed by the oil-development nexus. The third section deals with oil and development efforts in the Niger Delta. Last but not the least, is the concluding remarks.

Oil-Development Nexus

There is a multidimensional nexus between oil and development. Proponents of oil-led development believed that, countries lucky enough to have the ‘black gold’ can base their development on this resource. They point to the potential benefits from enhanced economic growth and the creation of jobs, increased government revenues to finance poverty alleviation, transfer of technology, the improvement of infrastructure and the encouragement of related industries. To the contrary, the consequences of oil-led development tend to be negative, including slower than expected growth, barriers to economic diversification, poor social welfare performance and levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Furthermore, countries dependent on oil as their major resource for development are characterized by exceptionally poor governance and high corruption, a culture of rent-seeking, often devastating economic, health and environmental consequences at the local level, and high incidences of conflict and war (Karl, 2007). Rent seeking, which ranges from lobbying to coercion, is unproductive activity to obtain private benefit from public action and resources. Pervasive rent seeking occurs where the state is weak, decaying, and lacking rule of law, and that is evidence in Nigeria. Another crucial point to note is that, whereas oil has promoted development in most developed countries like Russia, United States of America, Canada, France, Australia, etc. the experience in most developing countries and the third world differs, because they swim in the ocean of underdevelopment.

There is consensus among scholars that, oil has brought most developing countries more harm than good. The reason being that, oil wealth has tended to bleed away the pockets of officials, soldiers and other elites, warping a country’s development and far too often leaving its citizens in poverty (Scott-John, 2003). Therefore such countries score conspicuously low on the international development performance indices. To be candid, the oil-development linkage discourse in Africa has been largely framed around the “resource curse thesis”, which posits that oil wealth fuels state corruption, profligacy, social crisis, poor governance human rights abuses and ultimately violent conflict (Obi, 2007, Gary and Karl, 2003). This perception is clearly a spin-off of the “resource curse” thesis which is a mainstream explanation for (resource) conflicts and insecurity in Africa. The argument is that, huge natural resource endowments dampen, rather than brighten the prospects for development, paradoxically motivating people to struggle over resources, breeding corruption, marginalization, and armed insurgency. Oil revenue has also led to the neglect of other sectors of the economy that promotes development. In Nigeria for instance, the emergence of an oil-dependent economy in the 1970’s led to the systematic neglect of other sectors of the economy, especially the agricultural sector which used to be the mainstay of the economy.

The country suffer from acute underproduction of agricultural goods to sustain its teeming population, hence depends on massive food importation. In essence, the unbridled corruption, political instability and poor economic management have reduced the black gold to a curse in Nigeria rather than a blessing as it is in some oil-producing countries (Atojoko, 2008: 97). In fact, national economies that depend on oil are like tidal waves with ups and downs, boom periods and burst periods, which make petro-dollar management very crucial to achieve sustainable development. Therefore states with high drive for development gives premium to the distribution and management of oil wind falls during boom periods, and divert same to develop other sectors of the economy, but pitifully enough, that is not the case in Nigeria. The value system in the country has been debased such that, public treasures are flagrantly looted by the very officials entrusted with the responsibility of managing them. The cankerworm of corruption which has eaten deep into the Nigerian body polity has eventually made oil boom to become oil doom.

According to Maria Costa (The Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, UNODC):

Between 1960 when Nigeria became independent and 1999 when Democracy was restored, a staggering sum of 400 billion American dollars was stolen and slashed away by a generation of corrupt rulers. That is within a space of 39 years. And the discovery of oil, the nations cash cow, predated independence, if you are to put 400 billion dollars bills in a row, you could make a path from here to the moon and back not once but 75 times. The opportunity cost of the stolen common wealth is enormous (cited in Ajanaku, 2008:36).

The Niger Delta is the hub of oil and gas production in Nigeria, accounting for about 80% of total government revenue, 95% of foreign exchange and over 80% of national wealth. The oil Industry in the Niger Delta is dominated by Multinational Companies such as Chevron, Texaco, Exxon-Mobil, Total, AGIP, Shell Petroleum Development Company, ELF, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Presently, there are over 600 oil fields, 5,284 onshore and offshore oil wells, 10 export terminals, 275 flow stations, 4 refineries and a liquefied national gas project (Lubeck, Watts and Lipschits, 2007). Furthermore, as at 2007, statistics show that about 23,183.9 billion barrels of crude oil have been produced in the Niger Delta, which amounts to staggering national revenue of 29.8 trillion naira (TELL, February 18, 2008).

It is paradoxical that despite the abundant wealth the region parades, which happen to be the fiscal basis of the Nigerian state, majority of the people in the Niger Delta live in a state of chronic want. The region epitomizes one of the extreme situations of poverty and under development in the midst of plenty. Infrastructural development is very low, while poverty and unemployment levels are very high. The poverty level is about 80 percent, and unemployment level ranks 70 percent. Access to basic social amenities is very limited. For example, over 80 percent of the coastal or riverine communities' source water for drinking, cooking and other domestic uses is from polluted rivers, streams and lakes that are equally used for disposing of human and other forms of waste. The upland communities largely drink from shallow wells that are contaminated. Indeed, the Niger Delta falls below the national average, in all measures or indicators of development (Ibaba, 2005:13-14). The costs of living in the Niger Delta, is very high, and even the prices of petroleum products is one of the highest in the country. The region has over the years been deprived of peace, progress, justice, and the abundant resources that were expected to bring about good life to the inhabitants of the people have continued to be a mirage. Prior to the discovery and exploration of oil and gas resources in the region, the primary occupation of the people was fishing and farming, but oil exploration and exploitation has destroyed the subsistence economy of the people.

Testimonies from various quarters lend credence to the claim that environmental degradation occasioned by oil spillages has made life extremely difficult for the local people. The destruction of farmlands, fishponds and rivers had radically altered the economic life of the once self reliant and productive region for the worst (Okonta and Oronto, 2001:108). For instance, the consumption of food and water from this poisoned environment has led to the emergence of new diseases that are devastating to the health of the people of the region. The result of this is poor fecundity and lower life expectancy in the Niger Delta. Recent studies in two core Niger Delta states in Nigeria: Bayelsa and Delta shows that, there is one medical doctor for every 150,000 inhabitants. Oil has wrought only poverty, State violence and a dying ecosystem (Okonta, 2005). Inspired by the existential realities in the region, certain segments of the Niger Delta populace began to make demands on the Nigerian state and Multinational Oil Companies operating in the area to better their lot. But instead of redress, the people were visited with state violence, repression and brutalization. The invasion and occupation of Niger Delta communities such as Umuechem, Ogoni Land, Opia, Tombia, Kaiama, Soku, Odi, Odioma, Agee, Gbaramatu and Oporoza etc. by the Nigerian Military captures reality. Therefore, it is not surprising that the consciousness of exploitation, marginalization and disempowerment has made the Niger Delta a region of deep rooted frustration, hence the escalating crisis.

The armed insurrection against the Nigerian state was formally launched after the 1998 Kaiama Declaration. Comprising mostly of ethnic militias of which over 70% are of the Ijaw ethnic origin, the youths accuse the state, and in tandem the oil and gas ventures of systematic looting of their God given resources, destruction of the ecosystem and marginalization (Onoyume, 2007). The youths have therefore militarized the struggle to develop their backward environment and to secure greater control of oil revenue derived from the region. This led to the establishment of armed groups operating under such names as Egbesu Boys, MEINBUTU, Arogbo Freedom Fighters, Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and the dreaded Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

Oil and Development Efforts in the Niger Delta

In Nigeria, the race for oil actually began in the year 1908 when a German business interest formed the Nigerian Bitumen Company, to undertake exploration in the coastal areas between Lagos and Okitipupa in present Ondo state. The Company stopped its operations with the outbreak of the First World War. In 1937, Shell D'Arcy, the predecessor to the present day Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC), reactivated oil exploration activities in Nigeria (Ikein, 1990; 24). Shell discovered her first exploration oil well at Ihud in 1956, ten miles North-East of Owerri, Imo state. This was again interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. But after several years of search and the investment of 30 million American Dollars, oil was discovered in commercial quantity at Oloibiri in Ogbia Local Government Area of present Bayelsa state in 1958 (Azaiki, 2007:59). And since the early seventies, it is the oil produced in the Niger Delta enclave that sustains the Nigerian economy.

Be that as it may, what is on offer in the name of petro-development is the terrifying and catastrophic failure of secular nationalist development. From the vantage point of the Niger Delta, but no less from the vast slums of Kano or Lagos- development and oil wealth is a cruel joke (Watts, 2008: 12) The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describes the region as suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict. The region is one of the world's starkest and most disturbing examples of the "resources curse". Therefore, several efforts have been made to develop the Niger Delta by governments and the Multinational Oil Companies operating in the region. From the federal government perspective, efforts to develop the Niger Delta area dates back to the colonial era. The Willinks Commission which was set up to ascertain the fears of domination expressed by the minorities in pre-colonial Nigeria, and to propose means of allaying such fears, recommended the establishment of a Board to cater for the development needs of the area. The Commission described the Niger Delta region as "poor, backward and neglected", and reported that:

we cannot recommend political arrangement which would unite in one political unit the whole body of Ijaws; we do however consider that their belief that their problems are not understood could be largely met without the creation of a separate state, which we have rejected... the declaration of the Ijaw country as a special area would direct public attention to a neglected tract and give the Ijaws an opportunity of putting forward plans of their own for improvement (Willinks Commission Report, 1958:94-95).

It is important to note that, the specific mention of Ijaw here can be attributed to two reasons. First, the Ijaws are the dominant ethnic group in the Niger Delta. Second, they mainly occupy the swamps that are least developed. It is therefore not intended to exclude other ethnic groups in the Niger Delta. The Willinks Commission Report recommended the declaration of the Niger Delta as a "special area for development", thus the Federal Government established the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961 (Ibaba, 2005; 109). The main function of the Board was to advise the Governments of the Federation, Eastern and Western Region, with respect to physical development of the Niger Delta.

In order to discharge this responsibility, the Board shall: (1) Cause the Niger Delta to be surveyed in order to ascertain what measures are required to promote its physical development; (2) Prepare schemes designed to promote the physical development of the Niger Delta together with the scheme into effect, and (3) Submit to the Government of the Federation and the Government of Eastern and Western, Nigeria annually reports describing the work of the board and the measures taken in pursuance of its advice (Etekepe, 2007:45-46). The foregoing shows that, the Niger Delta Development Board was established without executive powers, but had only advisory powers. Thus, it had to recommend project to the Federal, Western and Eastern Regional Governments for execution. The implication was that, it was practically impossible for the Board to engage in project execution since the enabling instrument limited its assignment to advisory capacity in planning and designing projects. Again given that the Niger Delta people do not control these Governments, state officials had very little commitment to the ideals of the Board. The board was also underfunded, thereby truncating its developmental objectives.

The Niger Delta Development Board was later succeeded by the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority. Nigeria witnessed the creation of 10 River Basin Development Authorities in 1976, hence the Niger Delta Development Board was equally renamed Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority. There is no denying the fact that, with the politicization and proliferation of development authorities in the country, the funding problem became worse. The agency failed to succeed like its predecessor and lost its relevance as a body established for the special development needs of the Niger Delta. With the colossal failure of the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority to impact positively on the development of the region, the Federal Government in 1981 set aside 1.5% of funds from the Federation Account, for the development of the region (OMPADEC Quarterly Report 1993:3). And to effectively administer the fund, the Mineral Producing Area Development Council was created. A Committee was then constituted to administer the funds and its membership was appointed by the Federal Government. The category of people appointed to the Committee were completely ignorant of the problems of the region, thus, a yawning gap emerges between the aspirations of the people and the interest of the committee members.

However, the Committee had virtually done nothing, when the Supreme Court in a judgment (following a contention by the government of the old Bendel State) put a stop to the utilization of the fund (Ibaba, 2005:110). Later in 1985 and 1988, two committees were established. But just like the 1981 Committee, the 1985 Committee did nothing to liquidate the problems of the communities. However, the 1988 Presidential Committee on the development of the communities actually disbursed the funds and executed some projects. We must reiterate the fact that the oil producing communities were excluded from running the affairs of the Presidential Committee; which meant that their destiny was placed in the hand of people from other regions. This is because, in the Nigerian setting, the exercise of power (allocation of resources) at every point largely benefits the dominant group or individuals that wield power. The argument is that, the types of projects executed, and the beneficiaries of contracts, did not promote the interests of the oil producing communities; but the operators of the state, the Committee members and their collaborators. Again, due to lack of clear goals, so many projects were embarked upon at the same time. Hence, at the end of its existence in May 1992, a total of 1.207 projects were either abandoned or on-going (OMPADEC Quarterly Review, 1993: 15-44).

The Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), which was created by Decree No.23 of 1992, succeeded the Presidential Committee, to address the development problems of the Niger Delta. The fundamental objective of the Commission was spelt out as follows: (i) the rehabilitation and development of oil producing areas; (ii) the tackling of ecological problems that have arisen from the exploration and exploitation of oil minerals; (iii) to identify...the actual Oil Producing Areas and embark on the development of projects properly agreed on with the local communities of Oil Producing Areas; and (iv) to tackle the problems of oil pollution... (Cited in, Ibaba, 2005:116). It is significant to note that, OMPADEC was created to be funded by 3 percent of the Derivation Principle Fund. More so, it was created to direct the Derivation Fund for the specific and particular development of the oil producing communities. This was against the backdrop of neglect and marginalization suffered by oil producing communities like Oloibiri in the previous dispensations. Be that as it may, OMPADEC also failed to actualize the developmental aspirations of the oil producing Niger Delta region. The Commission was entangled by structural defects, financial imprudence, contract proliferation, and lack of goodwill from major ethnic groups in Nigeria, faulty project ideas, maladministration and lack of funding, nepotism, corruption and faults in implementation strategy. The living standard of the people would have improved if the programme implementation strategy of the Commission was appropriate. According to World Bank Report:

... OMPADEC only provides infrastructure or equipment. For example, it builds health centers but does not support staff for them. The obvious problem with such a development programme is that, the communities may not have the funds or expertise to maintain a project and watch it break down (World Bank Report 1995: 53-54)

This scenario was replicated in several projects hence making their provision useless. Local communities and other stakeholders were hardly consulted before the initiation and execution of projects. OMPADEC also suffered from poor funding as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Financial Allocations to OMPADEC, 1992 – 1996

N (000.00)	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	TOTAL
Expected Allocation to OMPADEC (N Billion)	6,042	6,414	6,621	27,827	38,586	85,490
Actual Allocation to OMPADEC (N Billion)	1,614	2,619	2,629	3,215	3,077	13,154
Allocation Short-fall to OMPADEC	4,428	3,795	3,992	24,612	35,509	72,336

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report and Account, 1999.

Clearly, OMPADEC was never paid the full 3 percent of the derivation principle of the Federation Account as provided by the law establishing the Commission. In the period under review, only 13.154 billion naira was released to OMPADEC out of the expected 85.490 billion naira. And this led to the abandoning of many projects. At another level of analysis, massive corruption and maladministration is seen as the bane of the establishment. The reason been that contracts were massively inflated, and full payments were made for shoddy or simply non-existent jobs. For instance, the report of the Eric Opia-Led investigation team revealed that, the Commission paid N6, 619,612,443 as mobilization fee to contractors who walked away with the money without doing any work (Okeke, 2009:40). The shoddy performance of OMPADEC, where by only 200 projects out of 1,338 initiated by them, and 1,347 inherited from the former Presidential Task Force were purported to have been completed is definitely not what the target beneficiaries of the Commission desired. It is for this reason that Chief Dappa-Piriye described the performance of OMPADEC as “a ship wreck” (Etekpe, 2007:64). As Azaiki (2007:90) put it, OMPADEC conceived grandiose and unwieldy projects which were not in the priority interest of the masses, so that the problem of development continues to exist unresolved. Thus, by and large OMPADEC failed to actualize its mandate.

With the culture of new administration/regimes, new development policy for the Niger Delta in Nigeria, OMPADEC was succeeded by the present Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with the enactment of the NDDC Act in 2000. The NDDC was given the mandate of facilitating “the rapid even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta in to a region that is stable, ecologically regeneration and politically peacefully” (Yishan, 2008). Since the NDDC was established after prolonged military rule in the country, a cross-section of Niger Deltans believed that the new Commission will go a long way in ameliorating the plight of the oil producing region, while others dismissed it as another cosmetic and tokenistic menu advanced to down play oil agitations, and that seems to be the case with the existential realities. According to the NDDC Act, the Commission is expected to be funded as follows: (1) Federal Government contribution of equivalent of 15% of monthly statutory allocation due to Niger Delta state; (2) 3% of total budgets of oil and gas producing companies; (3) 50% of ecological fund due to Niger Delta states; (4) Aid, e.t.c.

Though, the NDDC has a lofty mandate and good funding mechanism, it has equally failed to constitutionally address the fundamental issues of exclusion, marginalization and deprivation in the region. It also places the destiny of the people in a Commission they have no power to control. As stated in section 7(3) of the NDDC Act the Commission shall be subject to the direction, control or supervision, in the performance of its functions by the President, and Commander-in-chief. And this explains the inadequate funding crisis that presently bedevils the Commission. The argument is that, the Federal Government of Nigeria lack the political will to develop the oil producing but highly underdeveloped Niger Delta region, therefore treating funding of NDDC with kid gloves. On their part, the oil companies have also failed in this regard. The NDDC Committee of the House of Representative in the Nigerian National Assembly reported in 2003 that:

Some oil companies are not complying with the NDDC Acteven the Federal Government is not fully complying with the provision of the Act. For example, an oil company which year 2002 budget was 2.235 billion dollars, made a deduction of 627 million dollars from its budget before making its 3 percent deduction from the remainder. Another company budgeted 1,203 billion dollars for 2002, but deducted 504 million dollars before the 3 percent was worked out... Federal Government is also paying 10 percent instead of 15 percent (ANEJ, 2004:23).

The above practice has continued unabated, and it paints a clear picture about the reluctance of the government and oil companies to develop the region.

Table 2: Federal Government Releases to NDDC for the Period 2001-June 2004 (N000.00)

YEAR	BUDGET ALLOCATION	ACTUAL RELEASES	RELEASES % of BUDGET	RELEASES % of FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE
2001	N10,000	N7,500	75%	1.40%
2002	N12,650	N11,385	90%	1.86%
2003	N10,064	N10,064	100%	1.40%
2004	N14,000	N7,000	50%	1.33%
TOTAL	N46,714	N35,949	76.96%	1.22%

Source: Expenditure Department of Federal Ministry of Finance, Abuja, June, 2004 (cited in Etekpe, 2007).

The table above buttresses the fact that, the Federal Government is not sincere with the funding of the NDDC. As at 2007, the NDDC was owed a whopping sum of 224 billion naira by the Federal Government. And the decision of the Yar’Adua Administration to write off the debts (unreleased budgetary funds) owed the NDDC does not augur well for the region.

In terms of road construction, though the NDDC have executed some laudable road project in the region, financial constrains has limited its activities to link roads, or narrow roads that are not very capital intensive. More so, most shore protection projects in the region are also been abandoned due to lack of funding. A good example is the shore protection projects at Sabagreaia, Opokuma, Amassoma and Kaiama, among others. Misplaced priorities also constitute one of the lapses of the NDDC. For example the Commission built a landing getting for Isua-Joinkarama Community in Ahoada-West Local Government Council of Rivers State. The facility meant to aid motorized boat transportation in riverine communities is not of much benefit to the community which is accessible by tarred road and have not been using motorized boats for mass transportation. This is against other pressing needs in the community like health centre, class room blocks, pipe borne water etc that are begging for attention. In essence, whereas the NDDC have performed better than its predecessors, it has equally failed to bail the region out of the fog of underdevelopment. This is because, instead of embarking on massive roads, canals and bridges construction to open- up the region (especially the rural areas) not much has been done in that regard. In Yenagoa, Bayelsa state for instance, the presence of NDDC is only felt in the filthy sanitation waste bins provided by the Commission along major roads. In essence, the incessant setting up of Commissions upon Commissions is only a deliberate decoy to cover up the real issues of development affecting the region.

The Ministry of the Niger Delta was created in 2008 to augment the NDDC and to provide development in the region, but still no tangible achievement has been recorded. The Federal Government in 2009 approved about 200 billion naira for the construction of roads, bridges, hospitals and schools, targeted at accelerating the pace of development in the region, which is yet to record tangible result. The other levels of government in the Niger Delta: States and local, on the other hand, have also not been able to promote the much needed development in the region. The states complain of inadequate statutory financial allocations from the Federation Account to fund developmental projects. Nevertheless, corruption and financial recklessness have also dampened the development prospect of the Niger Delta by the various state governments in the region. Some states that have collected over 600 billion naira since 1999 have nothing to show for the huge money (Ihonvbere, 2007).

As regards the Oil Multinational Corporations, juxtaposing the profit that accrue to them and the attendant environmental degradation and backwardness with little or no sign of modernity in the host communities, they have scored conspicuously low, in terms of cooperate social responsibility. The undeniable reality is that, while the oil company's base or stations are equipped with modern social amenities that make life comfortable, the same cannot be said of the host communities in the same locality. What most oil bearing communities see at light in the night is the huge flames that characterize the night sky, burning unwanted gas (gas flaring). Thus, the oil multinational companies have also failed the Niger Delta people in the development of the region. The argument advanced by the oil companies is that, as business concerns that are paying taxes to the federal and state governments, it is not their responsibility to develop the region.

Concluding Remarks

This paper examined oil and development deficit in Africa; the failure of intervention agencies in Nigeria's Niger Delta. It started with an introduction where oil and development were conceptualized. It conceptualized oil as a valuable greasy liquid found in the surface of the earth and at depth, which is exploited and refined into dependable energy resource and sold for profit. It also looked at the term development as a process brought to bear on man and the environment, which changes for the better; improvement in poverty rate, birth rate, employment rate, infrastructure, quality of life, e.t.c. The contention is that, Africa is suffering oil-development deficit, considering the failure of government intervention agencies in Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta to transform the region. Thereafter, the paper analyzed the oil-development nexus, and opined that oil is the engine of development in countries endowed with the black gold.

Ordinary, oil-led development engenders enhanced economic growth, the creation of jobs, increased government revenues to finance poverty alleviation, transfer of technology, the improvement of infrastructure and encourage industrialization, especially in countries where the resource is efficiently managed to be positive results-oriented. On the other hand, the consequences of oil-led development are obviously slower than expected growth, barriers to economic diversification, poor social welfare performance and levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment, exceptional poor governance and high corruption, a culture of rent-seeking, often devastating economic, health and environmental consequences at the local level and high incidences of conflict and war (Karl, 2007; Scott-John, 2003). The oil-development nexus discourse in Africa posits that oil has unfortunately been a curse rather than a blessing to regions where it is the main source of revenue. This perspective explains the proliferation of resource conflict and insecurity in Africa.

For instance, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Sudan among others are African countries that have experienced various forms cum degrees of resource conflicts. Again, the rent-seeking character of the Nigerian state basically led to the progressive abandonment of the agricultural sector in preference for the easy oil revenue since the 1970s. And that it is the state of gross underdevelopment in the midst of plenty that inspired the spate of agitations which presently characterize the region. In order to correct the injustice, neglect and marginalization suffered by the people of the Niger Delta over the years, the Federal Government has adopted the establishment of intervention agencies to develop the region. Thus, in line with the recommendation of the Willinks Commission Report of 1958, government established the Niger Delta Development Board in 1961, the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority in 1976, the 1.5% Special Fund for Niger Delta development from the Federation Account in 1981 and the creation of the Mineral Production Area Development Council, the 1985 and 1988 Presidential Committees, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission in 1992, the Niger Delta Development Commission in 2000, and lately the creation of a full-fledged Ministry of Niger Delta in 2008. However, the major shortcomings that run through the veins of these intervention agencies approach to solving the Niger Delta problem that can be identified among others are; under funding, politicization of the activities and lack of political will to develop the region. The conclusion of this paper is that, the intervention agency approach to the problem of Niger Delta development is evidently a mere cosmetic solution to the deep rooted issue of sustainable development of the region. We recommend a change of attitude on the part of government and those appointed to administer the agencies. Otherwise Oil-development deficit will not end in the near future in Nigeria and indeed Africa.

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