

Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) And Peace Building in Ogoniland Nigeria

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DOI: 10.56201/ijssmr.vol.11no2.2025.pg.162.178

Abstract

Hydrocarbon pollution in Ogoniland, Nigeria, has been a significant environmental and social issue due to decades of oil exploration and exploitation by multinational corporations. The resultant degradation of land, water resources, and biodiversity has not only affected the ecosystem but also the livelihoods of the Ogoni people. This situation has led to conflicts between local communities, government authorities, and oil companies, necessitating a comprehensive approach to remediation and peace building. The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) was established by the Nigerian government in response to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report published in 2011. This report highlighted the severe environmental damage caused by oil spills in Ogoniland and recommended urgent action for remediation. HYPREP aims to implement these recommendations through a structured framework that includes assessment, clean up, restoration of contaminated sites, and sustainable development initiatives. HYPREP's remediation efforts focus on cleaning up polluted sites, restoring ecosystems, and ensuring that affected communities have access to clean water and healthy environments. The project involves various stakeholders including local communities, NGOs, government agencies, and international partners. Key activities include soil decontamination, water quality monitoring, health assessments for affected populations, and capacity building for local governance. In addition to environmental remediation, HYPREP plays a crucial role in peace building within Ogoniland. The project recognizes that environmental degradation is intertwined with social unrest; therefore, it incorporates conflict resolution strategies aimed at fostering dialogue among stakeholders. By involving local communities in decision-making processes regarding their environment and resources, HYPREP seeks to empower residents and reduce tensions that have historically led to violence. Despite its objectives, HYPREP faces numerous challenges including inadequate funding, bureaucratic delays, community skepticism regarding the sincerity of governmental efforts, and ongoing security issues related to militant groups in the region. These factors can hinder effective implementation of remediation projects as well as peace building initiatives. The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project represents a critical step towards addressing hydrocarbon pollution in Ogoniland while simultaneously promoting peace building efforts among affected communities. Successful execution of HYPREP's goals requires sustained commitment from all stakeholders involved as well as transparent communication with local populations to rebuild trust.

Keywords: *Hydrocarbon, Remediation, Peace building, Environment, Pollution, Clean up, Restoration*

Introduction

The Ogoni people are a unique indigenous minority group that lives in what is known as the South-South of Nigeria, which is located on the southeast edge of the Niger Delta River. Before huge amounts of crude oil were discovered, the Ogoni had a long history of peaceful cooperation with the government and a well-established social structure that placed a high value on their environment. Prior the discovery of crude oil in the Niger-Delta rich region, the inhabitants of Ogoniland were great fisher folks and farmers, producing for themselves and their neighbourhoods (United Nations Environmental Project, 2011a; Agaptus, 2019). However, the social structure and long-standing peaceful cohabitation in the area were disrupted with the 1956 oil discovery at Olobiri and the 1957 discovery of Ogoni. (UNEP, 2016; UNEP, 2011b). Once more, oil companies' extraction operations were conducted with little consideration for the detrimental effects they had on the environment and the people of Ogoniland. Between 1993 and mid-2007, there were over 35 documented oil spill incidents in Ogoni, despite the unreported and undetected incidents. There is no question that the devastating damage caused by oil companies' extraction operations and the government's failure to address the damages by resolving regional conflicts contributed to the escalation of Ogoniland conflicts (Tombari, 2019; Frynas, 2010). The truth is that decades of initiatives, negotiations, and protests have ultimately failed to produce a solution that satisfies the expectations and obligations of all parties (people of Ogoniland, oil companies and the The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) was approached by the Nigerian government in 2008 to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the oil exploitation in Ogoniland. The government's move, however, was in response to the Ogoniland people's complaint that the Anglo-Dutch oil company Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC), which has been extracting crude oil for decades, had destroyed their ecosystem through oil pollution and gas flaring. After completing its investigations, the UNEP published a report in 2011 that found SPDC was responsible for the extensive and pervasive oil pollution in Ogoniland, which would take roughly 25 to 30 years to remediate (UNEP, 2011). Furthermore, the investigation came to the conclusion that resolving environmental problems involving oil requires both physical cleaning and the adoption of political measures.

In 2012, the Nigerian state commenced the process of implementing UNEP report in Ogoniland. The environmental clean-up commenced with the inauguration of the Hydrocarbon Pollution and Remediation Project (HYPREP) agency. HYPREP which was saddled with the onus of ensuring the implementation of UNEP report (in area of environmental clean-up), however, it was not passably funded and its employees were not paid remunerations and eventually HYPREP collapsed in 2015. The widespread hope of Ogoniland people was shattered since the then President who is from Niger Delta could not carry out an effective clean-up process in Ogoniland.

President Muhammadu Buhari administration in 2015 brought about the resuscitation, reform and legal backing to HYPREP and constituted a fresh board of trustees and governing council, while at the same time, released a squalid sum of \$10million (out of a projected cost of \$1billion) for the clean-up of Ogoniland. Stakeholders and people of Ogoniland frowned at this action of the government, particularly, when the government persisted on resumption of oil production in concomitance with physical cleaning that is yet to take off. The Ogoni people not only rebuffed this display by the government but the action also engendered fresh conflict.

Consequently, actions by the government brought no profound moves with respect to the implementation of pragmatic and all-inclusive strategies to clean-up Ogoniland. Still, with the presence of indigenous oil firms like Robo Michael and Belema Oil, to substitute SPDC in Ogoni, prompted a new twist to competition for benefit incarceration and their related conflicts in Ogoniland. Overall, the contrasting perceptions of the clean-up proposed by UNEP and the expectations thereof pose a daunting contest to conflict as well as sustainable peace building in Ogoniland. Given the above occurrence in Ogoniland and UNEP report, there is therefore the need to conduct an evaluation of UNEP report on Ogoniland with a bid to assessing whether the environmental projects by UNEP lessen conflicts in Ogoniland.

The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) is an initiative launched by the Nigerian government, specifically aimed at addressing the environmental degradation caused by oil spills in the Niger Delta region, particularly in Ogoniland. This project was established following the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report published in 2011, which highlighted the severe impact of oil pollution on the ecosystem and communities in Ogoniland. The UNEP report recommended a comprehensive clean up and restoration plan for affected areas, leading to the establishment of HYPREP.

Peace building in the context of oil remediation, particularly in the Ogoni region of Nigeria, involves addressing the complex interplay of environmental, social, and economic factors that contribute to conflict. The Ogoni people have long faced environmental degradation due to oil extraction by multinational corporations, leading to significant ecological damage and social unrest.

By addressing the underlying causes of conflict, re-establishing institutions, and creating environments that discourage violence, peace building refers to the procedures and endeavors intended to bring about enduring peace. It is a long-term strategy that entails cooperation between various stakeholders, such as governments, non-governmental organizations, and civil society, in order to guarantee stability and enduring peace. "A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development," is how the United Nations (2007) defines peace building.

Efforts to promote peace have demonstrated both real effectiveness and difficulties in a variety of settings. The execution of peace building programs has resulted in the development of more resilient institutions, a decline in violence, and a rise in civic engagement in many post-conflict communities. For instance, data from Sierra Leone shows how community-based reconciliation initiatives in conjunction with the reintegration of former fighters into civilian life greatly decreased the risk of a return to violence (Omeje, 2007). This strategy emphasizes how crucial it is to attend to the socioeconomic needs of those impacted by conflict in order to promote long-term stability.

Peace building initiatives in Ogoniland, have concentrated on resolving environmental deterioration and the resulting social instability induced by decades of oil exploration. The HYPREP, which aims to clean up the contaminated environment, revive livelihoods, and re-establish confidence between the government and the people, has been essential in these attempts to promote peace. HYPREP's actions include cleaning up oil-contaminated locations, providing drinkable water, and encouraging health interventions, which are crucial for creating

peace and sustainable development in the region (Aroh, 2016). There are still issues, though, as the Ogoni people's frustrations have occasionally been heightened by implementation delays and a perceived lack of openness.

The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) was formed in response to the recommendations of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in its 2011 report on Ogoniland. In order to restore the ecosystem and support regional peace building, HYPREP is responsible for supervising the environmental clean-up and remediation of hydrocarbon-impacted locations. Even though the initiative has made headway, there have been many obstacles to overcome, such as mistrust in the community, insufficient money, and implementation delays. But the project's capacity to resolve environmental concerns, rebuild livelihoods, and initiate meaningful community conversations offers hope for peace building. The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between HYPREP and Ogoni Land peace building.

Statement of the Problem

The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYREP) was initiated in response to the environmental devastation caused by oil spills and gas flaring in Ogoniland, Nigeria. This region has faced significant ecological damage due to decades of oil extraction activities by multinational corporations, primarily Shell Petroleum Development Company. The pollution has not only affected the environment but also the livelihoods and health of local communities, leading to social unrest and conflict.

The primary problem addressed by HYREP is the extensive environmental degradation in Ogoniland. According to a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report published in 2011, it was estimated that over 50 years of oil operations had led to widespread contamination of land and water resources. The remediation project aims to restore these ecosystems, which are crucial for agriculture, fishing, and overall community well-being.

Several studies have evaluated the influence of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) on environmental restoration and peace building in the Niger Delta region, particularly in Ogoniland. For example, a thorough evaluation of the clean-up project's effects on fostering peace and restoring livelihoods was carried out by Akpan and Ekpo (2020). Their investigation showed that local people are still not happy with the rate of repair, even though HYPREP has made strides in detecting and resolving some environmental issues. This unhappiness has translated into extended tensions, although there has been a minor drop in violent clashes in some places.

Through the initiatives of HYPREP, Adewale and Nwafor (2019) investigated the function of community involvement in promoting peace. According to their research, the success of environmental restoration projects is positively impacted by community involvement in decision-making and implementation procedures. They discovered, specifically, that there were less disputes in communities where residents actively participated in the observation and assessment of HYPREP projects. In order to maintain peace in oil-polluted areas, the study stressed the significance of trust-building initiatives, such as open communication between local groups and government authorities.

The authors did, however, issue a warning, pointing out that the exclusion of certain communities from the decision-making process has made conflicts worse and that more widespread participation would improve the prospects for peace. A socioeconomic effect analysis of HYPREP on nearby villages impacted by hydrocarbon pollution was carried out by Oluwa and Adeyemi in 2021. The study concentrated on how initiatives for peace building were impacted by economic empowerment programs associated with the remediation project. The project's efforts to create jobs and improve skills had a discernible effect on lowering violence and restlessness, particularly in young people, according to the authors. This was especially noticeable in regions where initiatives to upgrade local infrastructure and create alternate sources of income coexisted with clean up operations. But the report also emphasized these programs' shortcomings, pointing out that the way benefits are distributed.

Eke and Ugwu (2022) explored the interaction of gender, environmental remediation, and peace building within the setting of HYPREP. Their research investigated the effects on community relations and peace outcomes of women's participation in the remediation effort. The results showed that decision-making processes have mainly ignored women, who are frequently the most impacted by environmental deterioration. However, there was a noticeable increase in the community's social cohesiveness and peace building efforts when women were integrated. The study came to the conclusion that activities aimed at promoting peace and the environment that take gender views into account can produce more equitable and long-lasting results. In areas such as the Niger Delta, social strife and environmental degradation especially hydrocarbon pollution have a well-established link.

The environmental issues have profound social implications. The local communities have experienced loss of income due to contaminated farmlands and fisheries. This economic hardship has fueled tensions between local populations and oil companies, as well as between different ethnic groups within Ogoniland. The HYREP seeks not only to remediate the environment but also to address these socio-economic challenges by creating job opportunities during the clean-up process and fostering sustainable development initiatives.

In addition to environmental restoration, peace building is a critical component of the HYREP. The ongoing conflicts related to resource control have led to violence and instability in Ogoniland. Effective peace building strategies must be integrated into the remediation efforts to ensure long-term stability. This includes engaging local communities in decision-making processes regarding remediation activities, promoting dialogue among stakeholders, and addressing grievances related to past injustices.

A significant challenge within this project is ensuring meaningful stakeholder engagement. Various actors including government agencies, local communities, civil society organizations, and oil companies must collaborate effectively for successful implementation. However, historical mistrust among these groups complicates this collaboration. Building trust through transparent communication and inclusive participation is essential for both effective remediation and sustainable peace.

The problem surrounding the HYREP remediation project highlights a multifaceted issue that encompasses environmental restoration, socio-economic recovery, and peace building in Ogoniland. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires a comprehensive approach

that prioritizes community involvement, equitable resource distribution, and long-term sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Environmental Justice Theory and supported by Conflict Resolution Theory.

The concept of Environmental Justice emerged prominently in the United States during the late 20th century, particularly in response to the civil rights movement and growing awareness of environmental issues. The term “Environmental Justice” was popularized in 1982 when residents of Warren County, North Carolina, protested against the siting of a hazardous waste landfill in their community, which was predominantly African American. This event is often cited as a pivotal moment that galvanized the environmental justice movement.

In 1991, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit took place in Washington, D.C., where a comprehensive definition and framework for Environmental Justice were established. This summit produced the “Principles of Environmental Justice,” which articulated the need for equitable treatment of all people regarding environmental laws and policies.

Environmental Justice Theory posits that all individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, have the right to a healthy environment. This theory is particularly relevant in the context of Ogoniland, where oil extraction has led to significant environmental degradation and health issues for local communities. The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) aims to address these injustices by restoring contaminated land and ensuring that affected communities are involved in decision-making processes regarding their environment (Adelekan et al., 2020).

The application of Environmental Justice Theory in Ogoniland emphasizes the need for equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. It supports the idea that remediation efforts should not only focus on physical clean up but also on empowering local communities through education, participation in governance, and access to resources. By addressing both environmental restoration and social equity, HYPREP can foster peace building by rebuilding trust between the government, oil companies, and the Ogoni people (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010).

Conflict Resolution Theory has its roots in various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and political science. One significant milestone in formalizing this theory occurred in 1970 with the publication of “The Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict” by Morton Deutsch. Deutsch’s work laid foundational principles for understanding conflict dynamics and proposed methods for resolution through cooperation rather than competition.

Another key development came with John Paul Lederach’s work in the 1990s. His book *“Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies,”* published in 1997, emphasized the importance of dialogue and relationship-building in resolving conflicts. Lederach’s contributions helped shape contemporary approaches to conflict resolution by integrating cultural sensitivity and grassroots involvement.

Conflict Resolution Theory provides a framework for understanding how conflicts arise from resource competition and environmental degradation. In Ogoniland, tensions between local communities and oil companies have historically led to violent confrontations and social unrest. This theory suggests that effective conflict resolution strategies can facilitate dialogue among stakeholders, promote mutual understanding, and ultimately lead to sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997).

Incorporating Conflict Resolution Theory into HYPREP involves creating platforms for dialogue where community members can express their grievances and participate in negotiations regarding resource management and environmental restoration. By fostering collaborative relationships among government agencies, oil companies, NGOs, and local communities, this approach can help mitigate tensions and build a foundation for long-term peace building efforts in Ogoniland (Fisher et al., 2000).

By integrating these two theories—Environmental Justice Theory’s focus on equitable environmental rights and Conflict Resolution Theory’s emphasis on dialogue—HYPREP can effectively contribute to both remediation efforts and peace building initiatives in Ogoniland.

An overview of Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project

With over 800 oil fields and an estimated 1481 operating oil wells in the Niger Delta, Nigeria is the sixth-biggest producer of crude oil in the world as well as the largest producer in Africa (Table 1). The 450 km of shoreline in the Gulf of Guinea constitute the Niger Delta, which is the center of Nigeria's oil production (Eke, 2016; Fig. 1). The country presently stands at 2.3 million barrels per day (Nriagu, 2019, Veraart et al., 2020), contributing over 90% of foreign exchange, and revenue in excess of \$600 billion USD, since 1960 (Sam et al., 2017a). Nigeria has proven crude oil reserves of at least 36.91 billion barrels (OPEC, 2020). Nigeria’s reliance on crude oil as the mainstay of the economy has persisted over five decades, while the cumulative impacts of oil exploration and production (E&P) continue.

Due to acute occurrences, over 50 years of oil exploitation, and an inadequate oil spill response policy, hydrocarbon-contaminated sites are widespread in the Niger Delta (UNEP, 2011, Allison et al., 2017, Sam et al., 2017a, Sam et al., 2017b). According to Ite et al. (2013), there were an estimated 2000 legacy sites in Nigeria that were contaminated with petroleum hydrocarbons as of 2013. Many oil spills went unreported, despite the fact that the temporal and spatial scales of oil occurrences in Nigeria have been documented (Nwilo and Badejo, 2001; UNEP, 2011; Zabbey and Olsson, 2017). (Dibofori-Orji et al., 2019).

Data from the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) show that, with an oil recovery of less than 30%, there were 16,476 spills at various places between 1976 and 2015, spilling nearly 3 million barrels of crude oil into the environment (DPR, 2002, DPR, 2016). Of these disasters, around 69% happen offshore, 25% happen in marshes, and over 6% happen on land (DPR, 2002, DPR, 2016). The ecosystem as a whole (air, water, and land), biodiversity, and public health are all impacted by oil pollution in the Niger Delta (Nriagu, 2019, Pegg and Zabbey, 2013, Sam and Zabbey, 2018, Zabbey et al., 2017). A majority of the oil spills are caused by manmade factors like drilling activities, pipeline explosions, loading at terminals and illegal tapping of pipelines.

In spite of these impacts, many crude oil E&P activities in the Niger Delta are undertaken with little adherence to the basic principles and practice of sustainable environmental management due to ad hoc and weak regulatory arrangements (Ambituuni et al., 2014, Sam et al., 2015, Sam et al., 2017b, Shittu et al., 2011). Zabbey et al. (2017) and UNEP (2011) provided a detailed account of the remedial measures deployed on legacy sites in Nigeria. They outlined the ineffectiveness of remediation by enhanced natural attenuation (RENA) and classified it as inappropriate given that legacy soil contamination in Nigeria was frequently more than 5 m depth. While the impact of oil exploration lingers, livelihood structures have been damaged or destroyed, producing disproportionately severe impacts on women and children (Bruederle and Hodler, 2017). A critical mass of the youth in and around impacted communities are unemployed, given that their primary livelihood (farming and fishing) had been destroyed (Pegg and Zabbey, 2013, UNDP, 2006, Zabbey, 2009a). This has led to youth restiveness, proliferation of violent groups and the loss of revenue to the government (Badmus, 2010, Salau, 1993, Ukeje, 2001, Zabbey et al., 2021a).

In response to persistent agitations from civil society organizations and the Ogoni people, the Nigerian government commissioned the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to undertake an environmental assessment of Ogoniland. In 2011, UNEP released a seminal report that chronicles severe oil contamination in the area and its attendant socio-ecological consequences. In 2012, the Nigerian government established the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project (HYPREP -herein after refers to as the first HYPREP). The first HYPREP was given a mandate to implement the UNEP recommendations on Ogoniland. Being a product of an Executive Order, it suffered severe funding issues and thus could not discharge its obligations. In 2016, the name of the agency was modified to Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project, retaining the same acronym HYPREP (hereafter, the current HYPREP). HYPREP was re-invigorated by setting up a Trust fund and establishing a defined governance structure. To undertake the clean-up of Ogoniland the current HYPREP was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria gazette No. 176, Vol. 103 in December 2016.

Synopsis of United Nations Environmental Report

The history of exploration and production of crude oil in Ogoniland is a long, intricate and distressing one that to date has turn out to be apparently obstinate in areas of its resolution and future direction. More so, it has place the people of Ogoniland and the government at loggerheads depicting a landscape typified by a lack of trust and blame (Agaptus, 2019). Realistically, decades of dialogue, scheme and protests have eventually failed to deliver a lasting solution to meet the expectations of both the people of Ogoniland and the government (Balouga, 2019; David & Tombari, 2019; and the Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth, 2016). Furthermore, to find a way from the deadlocks of dialogue, the Nigerian government in consultation with numerous of the germane actors, invited the United Nations to undertake an assessment of oil pollution in Ogoniland. In view of this, the United Nations carried out an independent assessment of the environment and public health impacts of oil contamination in Ogoniland, Niger Delta and options for remediation in its reports termed the United Nations Environmental Report (UNEP) (Tombari, 2019). The UNEP includes over 4,000 samples obtained from the analysis from more than 200 sites. The independent report of UNEP was also meant to show the nature and magnitude of oil pollution in Ogoniland (UNEP,

2016; Platform, 2016; and Owhonda, 2016; UNEP, 2011a; UNEP, 2011b; and Ejelonu, Adeleke, Ololade & Adegbuyi, 2011).

Initially, the UNEP consulted with a wide-range of stakeholders and United Nations country team in the country to consider the scope and feasibility of the assessment; however, the UNEP was confronted with inimitable challenges such as lack of trusts between actors, political apprehension between communities, local and national government, inability to gain access to Ogoniland, security, technical as well as logistical issues (Emam, 2016). Regardless of these challenges, UNEP undertake a study for breaking the decades of stalemate while offering the Nigerian government and stakeholders with a probable basis upon which trusts might be built and actions carried out to resolve the numerous environmental, health and sustainable development problems militating against the millions of people in Ogoniland (UNEP, 2011a; UNEP, 2011b; and UNEP, 2016).

According to Owhonda (2016), to ensure the independence of the UNEP study, a framework for cooperation was discussed such that a renowned team of international and national experts were recruited for a 2year assessment. Over a 14 month period, UNEP examined over 200 locations, surveyed 122 kilometres of oil pipeline right of way, evaluated over 5,000 medical records and engaged more than 23,000 people in Ogoniland in a community meeting (UNEP, 2011b; UNEP, 2011a; and UNEP, 2016). Following the preliminary investigations, UNEP identified 69 sites for soil and groundwater assessment in addition to samples of community drinkable water, sediments from creeks, rainwater, surface water, fish and air were obtained throughout Ogoniland and in several neighbouring villages or towns (UNEP, 2016).

The samples were obtained following the globally accepted sample management procedures for analysis accredited (ISO 17025) to laboratories in the Europe. Findings of the UNEP underscores that there are significant number of locations, grim threats to health resulting from contaminated drinkable water together with pollution that has penetrated deeply in Ogoniland (UNEP, 2016). The UNEP offered the government and stakeholders with priceless, baseline information on the level of the challenges, programmes and actions in areas of cleanup and remediation of the Ogoniland.

The UNEP provides some insightful recommendations for the Nigerian government and all stakeholders concerned given the enormous amount of data obtained in the UNEP assessment (UNEP, 2016; UNEP, 2011a). First, the UNEP study concluded that the environmental restoration of Ogoniland is feasible but may take 25-30years and that this would bring about a lasting improvement in the contaminated Ogoniland and Nigerian federation as a whole. Second, due to widespread of contaminations in Ogoniland and nearby towns or villages, and degrees of degradation will not be one single clean-up for the entire community. Thus, the UNEP recommended a blend of approaches ranging from active intervention for cleaning top soil and re-cultivating the mangrove to inert monitoring of natural regeneration.

Third, locals in Ogoniland who have consumed water from the contaminated sources should be asked to embark on an all-inclusive medical examination by expert physicians on the likely adverse health effects of the hydrocarbons detected. More so, a well-focused medical study should commence to help track the health situations of the people of Ogoniland over their lifetime towards ensuring any likely health impacts that may arise in the future (UNEP, 2016; UNEP, 2011b).

Notably, the most serious cases of contamination in the Ogoniland was reported in areas such as Nisisioken-Ogale in Eleme, Gokana, Tai and Khana, which are close to the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) product pipeline. Notwithstanding the UNEP, there are outcries by locals that the recommendations by the independent assessment team are yet to provide the needed solution to the issues of oil pollution in Ogoniland.

Critique of the United Nations Report and Environmental Conflict in Ogoni

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is the world's third largest mangrove ecosystem, a major fish breeding ground for West Africa and is also very rich in oil and gas reserves. Oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta region started during the 1950s. Operations were suspended in Ogoniland in early 1990s due to local agitation for a better environment following several oil spills which had impacted on people's lives as well as the atmospheric, aquatic and terrestrial resources in the region (UNEP, 2011). Since oil exploitation was stopped in Ogoniland, the fields and installations have remained dormant, environmental contamination arising from these facilities have are yet to be remediated, while further oil spills have resulted from lack of maintenance, oil theft for artisanal refining and in some cases, sabotage resulting in increased agitation from the region.

Administratively, Ogoniland is sub-divided into four local government areas namely Eleme, Tai, Khana, and Gokana Local Government Areas (LGAs), all in Rivers State, Nigeria and the study was conducted in these four LGAs. In July 2006, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), an international inter-governmental organization established by the General Assembly of the United Nations, represented by its Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch of the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation received a formal request from the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the environmental and public health impacts of oil contamination in the four LGAs of Ogoniland in the Niger Delta region, and to suggest options for remediation and clean-up (UNEP, 2011).

The expected output is the production of a comprehensive assessment of all environmental issues associated with the oil field activities in Ogoniland, including the quantification of impacts; recommendations regarding the scope, modalities and means of remediation of soil and groundwater contamination; evaluation of alternative technologies which could be employed to undertake such remediation. Also expected is the generation of a database of environmental quality for Ogoniland; recommendations for sustainable environmental management of Ogoniland; and enhancement of local capacity for better environmental management and sustainable development (UNEP, 2011)

The project funding was negotiated to ensure the independence and integrity of the assessment. In line with the polluter-pays principle, the government, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of Nigeria and UNEP agreed the US\$9.5 million project cost would be borne by SPDC (a joint venture between the government, Shell International, Elf/Total and Agip). A Presidential Implementation Committee (PIC) monitored the project while a Community Consultation Committee (CCC) advised UNEP project team and articulated inputs/concerns from the local communities. The CCC also served as a bridge between the people and UNEP (UNEP, 2011).

The UNEP assessment was carried out over a 14-month period; UNEP team examined more than 200 locations, surveyed 122kms of pipeline rights of way, reviewed more than 5,000 medical records and engaged over 23,000 people at local community meetings. Besides, detailed soil contamination investigations were conducted at 69 sites. Altogether more than 4,000 samples were analyzed, including water taken from 142 groundwater monitoring wells and soil extracted from 780 boreholes (UNEP, 2011).

The findings from the unprecedented UNEP environmental assessment suggest that the environmental degradation arising from the widespread pollution is extensive. Therefore, a comprehensive environmental restoration effort is required for full rehabilitation of Ogoniland that may require as many as 25 to 30 years for completion. This necessitates an initial 1billion US dollars set aside for the first 5years of a 30yearclean-up project in Ogoni-land alone. UNEP reported that 10 out of the 15 investigated sites which the SPDC records pointed out as having completed remediation, still had pollution exceeding SPDC, and government regulatory remediation closure values. Moreover, the report also suggests that the contamination at eight of these sites had migrated to groundwater. UNEP's report evidenced SPDC's deficient remediation processes, and described them as unfit for Ogoniland and therefore require scrutiny and re-evaluation.

Despite the UNEP report, the Ogoniland have been adversely affected by the impact of oil spills caused by long-term oil exploration and production activities, which have resulted in very high unemployment and hardship due to the destruction of the natural resource base in the area. According to the most comprehensive study to date by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), government regulation, technical and logistic capacity is limited and the control, maintenance and decommissioning of oilfield infrastructure by oil companies is inadequate.

There are numerous movements (like MEND, MOSSOB and MOSOP) and the deaths of prominent people in Ogoniland struggle. The movements led to the death of prominent people who were killed by these social movement group members, then the Abacha led government that killed Ken Saro-Wiwa. Partly in response to the environmental consequences of oil production, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was the most fundamental, which was founded under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa (Tijen, 2015; Senewo, 2016). In 1990, MOSOP presented Ogoni Bill of Rights to the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Bill included a number of references to environmental issues. In 1993, Saro-Wiwa joined 300,000 Ogoni on a march to demand a share in oil revenue and greater political autonomy.

The conflict within the region, however, was not resolved in a peaceful manner. As a consequence of the ensuing violence, oil exploration and production activities in Ogoniland ceased in 1993. The event was followed by a succession of activities that led to extra-judicial killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues from Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) pressure group in November 1995 for allegedly organizing an unapproved mass rally against the interest of the Nigeria state during the then Abacha led government. Ken Saro-Wiwa was hanged alongside eight other prominent Ogoni leaders in Port Harcourt. Continued social upheaval in the area further alienated the Ogoni community from SPDC, and MOSOP has since been campaigning for the total expulsion of Shell from Ogoniland.

The Shell-Ogoni crisis was one of the crises in Nigeria that has witnessed the use of the three forms of intervention in the country, and yet the situation can best be described as an impasse.

As part of the recommendations of the UNEP reports, environmental clean-up, compensation for impacted communities, respond to wider issues of political marginalization as well as economic deprivation were part of the recommendations as means of resolving the conflict in Ogoniland. According to Tombari (2019), the people of Ogoni believed that full implementation of UNEP report on Ogoniland and Ogoni Bill of Rights will ameliorate all their sufferings as well as resolving the conflicts in Ogoniland. Moreover, whether the full implementations of UNEP reports are effective in remedying Ogoniland conflict was further assessed.

The poor implementation of the UNEP report in the view of Yakubu (2017), has been in connection with the persistent lack of political will on the part of the Nigerian government, and gross nonchalant attitude by Shell, which remains a major obstacle towards the execution of UNEP's recommendations. In addition, Emam (2016) and Emam (2016) blamed the poor implementation of UNEP reports on the deficient strategies used by the Nigerian government and Shell in addressing Ogoniland conflict. Moreover, whether UNEP reports have significant effect on Ogoniland conflict was further assessed.

Yakubu (2017) posits that due to the fact that the UNEP reports had not yielded the desired result, more conflicts have erupted in the Niger Delta region as inhabitants are unable to gain economic power and material resource control. This view is further reinforced by the conflict theory. The conflict theory of Karl Marx and other prominent theorists of conflict - Ralph Dahrendorf, Georg Luckas and Lewis Coser see human society as a buildup of groups that usually struggle for power; the struggle for power may be economical, material resource control, political, social amid others. Agaptus (2019) believes that the struggle for economic, political and material resource-control powers, to an extent precipitated the conflict between people of Ogoniland and the government.

The core issue to note is the Nigerian Government has been insensitive in remediating and cleaning - up Ogoni land. Very little has been done in this regard. It has been lip service, and this has exacerbated conflicts within the area, with drum of communal rifts, criminality, and all sorts of activities that negates human lives. There have also been cases of crude oil theft, associated with artisanal refining. This has impact on human security. The sincerity of the government in this regard towards the clean - up and remediation is a desideratum to peace, which would restore confidence and productivity of the people.

HYPREP and Challenges of Clean-up.

There is huge attention to oil resumption in Ogoni areas of Rivers State, South-South Nigeria. This is as it is clear President Bola Ahmed Tinubu wants oil business to resume in Ogoni which has four local council areas. Should Ogoni oil or OML 11 resume today, Nigeria's desire to hit over 2m barrels per day (2mbpd) would be realized and the budget may have brighter hope.

This is because OML 11 holds 33 oil wells that can spill 250,000 bpd. To put FG proboscis into this well, the Ogoni people must be pacified. Yet, there are many other oil assets around

the Niger Delta that could fetch more oil to Nigeria on the road to 4mbpd. More pacification may be needed to calm the oil region down and drill their oil.

The federal government of Nigeria has over the years relied on the \$1bn clean-up to pacify the Ogoni people and drill the oil under their feet. The clean-up is being handled by the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) which was set up to carry out the clean-up. This in itself seems to have been bugged by many obstacles, making the cleaner to need help.

The challenge was that HYPREP was seen to be unwieldy and full of bureaucracy. It has a Governing Council which acts as the clearing house, it has Board of Trustees (BoT), and Management under the Project Coordination Office (PCO). Yet, all these organs report to the Minister, the Federal Executive Council (FEC), the Presidency, and the National Assembly that has two houses and two committees for oversight.

The oil majors that contributed the \$1bn also have layers of oversight. It was argued that before any job would be awarded, several interests and authorities would descend and exercise influence, for good or bad. Besides, HYPREP began under the Ministry of Petroleum in the Jonathan administration but moved to the Ministry of Environment during Buhari. These added more burdens on the Agency in trying to get started. It may also have created additional schism and intra-ministerial coldness that may have affected HYPREP.

The major python on ground waiting to swallow the new baby (HYPREP) was expectation crisis whereby the Ogoni people who initially rejected the UNEP team now expected financial compensation in terms of cash handouts. At least, they expected their young and educated people to be given direct jobs on day one. Some chiefs were quoted to have demanded for cash allocations to go 'clean' their areas. Some chiefs and strong men are said to have even to this day fenced off areas of polluted land as theirs, asking to be allowed and funded to clean the places.

In Ogoni as in most oil communities, there is usually a big problem of who owns the land. Most families claim to own the piece of land where oil is found, but oil activities usually spread beyond that well head area because pollution goes far and wide. So, according to sources, there is usually a dispute between landlord of well head area and landlords of polluted areas, let alone political leaders of an area that may bulldoze their way into the front to demand to represent a community. There is also the issue of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) who led the struggle that brought the benefits and who lost men. They are said to stand against any dialogue of negotiation between the government or any oil company with any community without them. This too seems to create the counter statements that emanate from the area on almost every issue under the sun. Often, MOSOP is divided into factions, thus making the counter statements to be more multiple. This seems to have created huge smoke of confusion in Ogoni and seems to have made it intractable how to discuss and resolve the Ogoni crisis for oil to resume.

These factors plus elements of corruption that cannot be ruled out in any transaction in most Nigerian affairs were said to be reason for frequent change in leadership of HYPREP, also adding its own disruption. Little wonder when the present Project Coordinator (PC), a Professor, Nenibarini Zabbey, who was not long on seat, was removed and replaced with a

western Nigerian Professor, hell broke loose and Zabbey was returned immediately. This seemed to send a big warning to the natives that too much infighting could lead to total loss of headship opportunity of HYPREP.

The biggest obstacle so far, according to experts and non-governmental organisations monitoring HYPREP, could be approval processes. The multinationals that release the \$1bn in tranches every year demand for world class accounting and transparency processes as condition for further release. The operators at the PCO have many masters to answer to from the BoT to Governing Council to FEC to the Presidency to the NASS committees, thus needing to satisfy many standards and pressures and demands.

In Nigeria where lawmakers regard oversight as weapon to directly run a government agency, else withhold their budget, and a country where supervising ministries seem to want to appropriate funds of agencies under them, many sources say getting papers passed in HYPREP may seem like the proverbial camel attempting to pass through the eye of a needle. Different amounts need different layers of approval, whereas variations often get stuck.

Conclusion

The pollution of Ogoniland environment due to exploration and exploitation of crude oil has been a major problem. In January, 2008, militants blew up pipelines in Ogoniland, reasons for which were attributed to protest against pollution of communities' environment. These sources of pollution has affected the livelihood of people and resulted to environmental health problems for the people of Ogoniland. This study argues that the conflicts in Ogoniland can be linked to several social movement groups struggling for power (economical, material resource control, political, and social) coupled with the role elites play in controlling the vast portion of the resources of the region. More importantly, the struggle for economic, political and material resource-control powers, to a large extent precipitated the conflicts between the people of Ogoniland and the government.

The study concluded that though the UNEP reports and recommendations are effective in addressing the Ogoniland conflict, however, its implementation has been weak, hence the reasons for the insignificant effect of UNEP reports in ameliorating the Ogoniland conflict. The findings thus call for some policy recommendations for the Nigerian government, oil companies as well as elites of Ogoniland.

The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) plays a crucial role in the peace building process in Ogoniland, particularly in the context of environmental remediation and community engagement. The ongoing environmental degradation due to oil spills has not only affected the ecological balance but has also led to socio-economic challenges, exacerbating tensions within communities. HYPREP's mandate includes not only the physical clean up of contaminated sites but also fostering local capacity building, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and enhancing governance transparency.

To effectively contribute to peace building, HYPREP must prioritize inclusive decision-making processes that actively involve women and other marginalized groups within the Ogoni communities. Women, who are often disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, have critical insights and roles in agricultural production and community welfare.

Their exclusion from decision-making processes can lead to dissatisfaction and unrest among community members.

Furthermore, HYPREP's initiatives should focus on creating platforms for dialogue among stakeholders, including local communities, civil society organizations, and government agencies. This engagement is essential for building trust and ensuring that the remediation efforts align with the needs and expectations of the affected populations. By addressing grievances related to environmental damage and involving communities in shaping their futures, HYPREP can contribute significantly to restoring peace and fostering social cohesion.

In summary, while HYPREP is tasked with addressing environmental contamination in Ogoniland, its success as a peace building entity hinges on its ability to engage inclusively with all segments of society. By doing so, it can help mitigate conflicts arising from resource competition and promote a shared vision for sustainable development in the region.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for this study:

It is crucial for HYPREP to actively involve the Ogoni communities in every stage of the clean-up process.

HYPREP should establish a transparent communication strategy that regularly updates the Ogoni communities on progress, challenges, and future plans regarding the clean-up efforts.

In addition to environmental remediation, HYPREP should implement programs aimed at addressing the socioeconomic challenges faced by the Ogoni people.

To address historical grievances regarding resource ownership and control, it is essential for HYPREP to advocate for legal reforms that empower the Ogoni people with rights over their natural resources.

HYPREP should collaborate with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as international environmental bodies to leverage expertise in environmental remediation and peace building strategies.

That the government should fully implement the UNEP reports by engaging sincerely, the clean-up of the polluted environment of Ogoniland. For instance, the government should implement all the recommendations made by the UNEP reports by engaging stakeholders (government and Ogoniland people).

The socioeconomic wellbeing of the people of Ogoniland should be improved while at the same time, there should be perpetual engagement between the government and the people of Ogoniland on issues relating to their socioeconomic wellbeing and reduction in the economic hardship imposed by the exploration and exploitation activities of oil companies; these are needed in order to avert future conflicts in Ogoniland.

That effective strategies aimed at realizing UNEP recommendations are required; more so, more funds should be allocated by the Nigerian government for the projects' effectiveness and full implementation.

There should be adequate compensation for polluted lands by government. The Ogoni has some of the best soil in the world in terms of cost and durability. The benefit is not commensurate with the hazard; hence they deserve adequate compensation for all this years of exploration.

There should be endless follow-up on the progress of the UNEP report by government as well as all stakeholders.

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