

## Environmental Conflict and Internal Migration in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Okwechime, Iwebunor

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Okwechime, I. (2013). *Environmental Conflict and Internal Migration in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*. (COMCAD Working Papers, 119). Bielefeld: Universität Bielefeld, Fak. für Soziologie, Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development (COMCAD). <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-51012-0>

### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

### Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Iwebunor Okwechime\*

## **Environmental Conflict and Internal Migration in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria**

Paper presented at the ESF-UniBi-ZiF research conference on 'Tracing Social Inequalities in Environmentally-Induced Migration', Center for Interdisciplinary Research, Bielefeld, Germany, December 09-13, 2012

COMCAD Arbeitspapiere - Working Papers  
S  
No.119, 2013

Series on Environmental Degradation and Migration  
Editors: Jeanette Schade and Thomas Faist

\* Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Comments welcome to:  
[bokwechime@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bokwechime@yahoo.co.uk)

## Editorial

The conference “Tracing Social Inequalities in Environmentally-Induced Migration” was the second in a new series of conferences on “Environmental Degradation, Conflict and Forced Migration”. It was organised by the European Science Foundation, in cooperation with Bielefeld University and its Center for Interdisciplinary Research. Already on the occasion of the first conference of the series the Center on Migration, Citizenship and Development (COMCAD), the university’s unit responsible for scientific content and quality of the conference, had launched a COMCAD Working Paper Series on “Environmental Degradation and Migration”. In the wake of the second conference, the editors are pleased to now start the second round of this working paper series. It intends to give conference participants the opportunity to share their research with an even broader audience.

The 2010 conference focused on how environmental change impacts the interplay between vulnerabilities on the one hand and capabilities on the other hand, and how this relationship affects mobility patterns. The 2012 conference concentrated on the societal backgrounds of this interplay and is meant to integrate a social inequalities perspective into current debates. Not all actors are equally vulnerable to climate and environmental change and environmentally-induced migration. Therefore, social inequalities between world regions, countries, geographical regions, organizations, groups and categories of people involved in environmental and climate-induced migration constitute the core thematic focus. Differential susceptibilities and capabilities to cope with environmental change on local, national and global scales rather depend on resource inequalities, power inequalities and status inequalities. Differences in vulnerability result from and are reproduced by the unequal impacts actors have upon politics and society as well as by the material and immaterial resources at their disposal. The 2012 conference was thus meant to shed light on the role of social inequalities in environmentally-induced migration and the mechanism of its reproduction.

The researchers invited represented a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, social anthropology, migration, conflict, gender and development studies, geography, political science, international law, as well as climate and environmental science. The conference was well balanced in terms of geographic origin, gender, and academic status of the participants. The conference programme and full report can be found at the conference website ([http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/\(en\)/tdrc/ag\\_comcad/conferences/envimig2012.html](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/(en)/tdrc/ag_comcad/conferences/envimig2012.html)).

Bielefeld, April 2013

Jeanette Schade and Thomas Faist

Okwechime, Iwebunor: Environmental Conflict and Internal Migration in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, Bielefeld: COMCAD, 2013 (Working Papers – Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development;119)

The COMCAD Working Paper Series is intended to aid the rapid distribution of work in progress, research findings and special lectures by researchers and associates of COMCAD. Papers aim to stimulate discussion among the worldwide community of scholars, policymakers and practitioners. They are distributed free of charge in PDF format via the COMCAD website.

The opinions expressed in the papers are solely those of the author/s who retain the copyright. Comments on individual Working Papers are welcomed, and should be directed to the author/s.

Bielefeld University  
Faculty of Sociology  
Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development (COMCAD)  
Postfach 100131  
D-33501 Bielefeld  
Homepage: [http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/ag\\_comcad/](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/ag_comcad/)

## Abstract

This paper examines environmental conflict and internal migration in Nigeria's oil producing Delta Region. While it is true that the literature and discourse on the Niger Delta have dealt substantially with the violence and tensions resulting from the militarization of the region and brutal repression over the years of restive communities, it needs stressing that scant attention has been paid to the critical issue of environmental conflict and internal migration in the Delta region. The paper contends that the dynamics of environmental conflict and internal migration in the Niger Delta are deeply rooted in the contradictions thrown up by oil-dependent global capitalist system and the processes of globalization, which have fed into and escalated the complex dynamics of internal migration, the rentier character of the Nigerian state and the oil industry in the ecologically fragile Niger Delta region. The paper locates these contradictions in, among other things, the penetration of global capital into a largely rural society, environmental pollution and degradation, the nature of development which perpetuates inequality and differential access to resources, the paradox of poverty amid wealth, and the restiveness and violence it generates in the region. In conclusion, the paper argues that, while environmental conflict and internal migration pose serious challenges to the development of the oil-rich region, in particular, and the Nigerian state in general, the Nigerian state and its joint venture partners (the multinational oil corporations) must the challenge of genuinely tackling, in a holistic fashion, decades of exclusion and injustice, corporate neglect, environmental destruction and other oil-based contradictions that have continued to spawn environmental conflict and internal migration in this oil-rich, but ecologically fragile ecosystem.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Conceptual Issues
  - 2.1 The Niger Delta
  - 2.2 Environmental Conflict
  - 2.3 Internal migration
3. Environmental Conflict in the Niger Delta: Causal Factors
4. Six Case Studies of Environmental Conflict in the Niger Delta
  - 4.1 Iko-Shell clash, 1987
  - 4.2 The Umuechem-Shell clash, 1990
  - 4.3 The Egi-ELF clash, 1993
  - 4.4 The Ogoni-Shell crisis
  - 4.5 Ijaw Youth Council versus Shell and the state
  - 4.6 The Odi invasion, 1999
5. Conclusion
6. References

Interviews

References

## 1. Introduction

Prior to the 1980s, environmental conflicts in Nigeria's oil-bearing Delta were relatively unknown. This by no means suggests that the very factors that have spawned environmental conflicts in the Niger Delta had not existed before the 1980s. On the contrary, an explanation of the upsurge in environmental conflicts and attendant internal migration in the region should be sought in the contradictions arising from the globalization of capital in the local environment coupled with the deepening national economic crisis generated by decades of military dictatorships, corruption, bad governance and worsening levels of poverty. It is equally significant to highlight, as part of the explanation, the contradictions created by the oil industry in the oil communities and how these have fed into and intensified the existential problems facing the inhabitants of the region. Arguably, environmental conflict in the Niger Delta constitutes the most important cause of internal migration not only within the region, but also other parts of the country. For the purpose of this paper, however, analysis will be focused upon the Niger Delta region. This paper is structured into four interlinked sections, with the first based on a conceptualization of the key notions in the paper, namely the Niger Delta, environmental conflict and internal migration. In the second section, the analysis focuses on environmental conflict and the causal factors, while the penultimate section is devoted to five case studies of environmental conflicts in the oil-producing communities. The fourth and final section of the paper sums up the analysis.

## 2. The Conceptual Issues

In the context of this paper, the conceptual issues include the Niger Delta, environmental conflict and internal migration. In order to ensure a proper understanding of these issues, this section will attempt to clarify these concepts and, in so doing, demonstrate their dialectical relationship to global capitalism as operates in that resource-rich region of Nigeria.

### 2.1 The Niger Delta

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006:19) the Niger Delta comprises the area covered by the natural delta of the Niger River to the east and west. The Niger Delta Environmental Survey (NDES) defines the Niger Delta as the low lying arcuate deltaic plain with a northern apex a little to the south of Onitsha at Aboh (503° 44"N,

603°38"E) a western apex by the estuary of the Benin River (5033"E), and an eastern apex at Imo River estuary (4027°16"N, 7035°27"E) (NDES, 2000). Put another way, the western and eastern boundaries of the delta can be found around the Benin River and the Imo River, its northern boundaries are situated close to the bifurcation of the Niger River at Aboh.

As Africa's largest wetland and the third largest mangrove in the world, it is through the Niger Delta's eight major rivers, twenty-one estuaries and a dense network of distributaries empty their waters and sediments into the Atlantic Ocean. Apart from being one of the major biological areas in the world, the Niger Delta is also rich in mineral resources, notably oil and gas. While there is no one-line definition of the Niger Delta, extant definitions have been either "cartographic" or "political" (Roberts, 2005:95; International IDEA, 2003, Azaiki, 2005). According to Roberts, the cartographic definition highlights the "natural Niger Delta", while the political definition is based, essentially, on the components States in the region and are, sometimes, extended to cover all the all oil-producing areas, as well as other content-specific "operational definitions". Estimates regarding the size of the Niger Delta vary from 25000 square kilometres (UNDP Report, 2006:19) to 30,000 square kilometres (Osuntokun, 1999, cited in Roberts, 2005:97).

For our purposes in this paper, then, we shall adopt the UNDP (2006:19) definition of the Niger Delta as embracing "all the oil-producing areas and others considered relevant for reasons of administrative convenience, political expedience and developmental objectives." Included this definition are all the nine oil-producing States of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Baylsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. Based on this "political" definition, the Niger Delta land area extends to 75000 square kilometres (UNDP, 2006:19; Roberts, 2005:95). Four distinct ecological zones can be identified, namely coastal ridge barriers, mangroves, fresh water swamp forests and lowland rain forests (Onosode, 2003:63; UNDP, 2006; 19-20). It has been shown (Roberts, 2005:96-97) that beyond this formation, the natural environment of the Niger Delta is divided into two ecological zones, namely, "the riverine" and the "upland". According to Roberts, while the lower vegetation in the lower delta (which is riverine) consists of mangroves, that of the upper delta consists of fresh water swamp rain forest. As should be expected, the distribution of occupations has been largely determined by the division of the natural environment. Roberts has noted that "the drier lands towards the head of the delta mainly supports farming, the collection and processing of palm fruits, hunting and some fish, while much further south, the riverine economy revolves mainly around fishing and trading. The UNDP Report cited states that agriculture, fishing and forestry account for about 44 % of employment in the region.



As a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-cultural society, the Niger Delta comprises over 20 different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, many of whom trace their origins to the Yoruba, Igbo, Edo and Ijaw. It is these groups, together with the Delta Cross, that constitute the five major linguistic and cultural groups in the region (UNDP, 2006:21). Based on the 2005 census, the population of the people in the Niger Delta is over 30 million. Among the ethnic groups in the region the Ijaw, who are distributed among six states of the Nigerian federation, constitute the largest single ethnic group in the region and the fourth largest in the country.

## 2.2 Environmental Conflict

Given its natural location, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-cultural character, the Niger Delta is no stranger to environmental conflicts. As Ifeka (2001:101) has noted, conflict over the ownership and distribution of resources has been a defining feature of Niger Delta's economic history. For example, in *The Great Ponds*, a novel set in pre-crude oil Niger Delta society, Elechi Amadi (1968) captures the violent dispute between two coastal communities over the ownership of fish ponds. Similarly, trade disputes over the control of trading posts and routes were not uncommon among the pre-colonial communities of the Niger Delta (Alagoa, 2004; Ikime, 2005). However, the presence of oil companies in the Niger Delta over the last fifty years has not only altered the nature and dynamics of environmental conflicts in the region, but also exacerbated them in ways that have defied a lasting solution (Human Rights Watch, 2002, Amnesty International, 2005). It has been argued (Onosode, 2003; Adekunbi, 2008, Ikelegbe, 2010; Adeyemi, 2010; Okwechime, 2011, Obyiuwana, 2012) that oil and gas development has led to the intensification of conflict in the Niger Delta and the growth of environmental concerns, both of which are inextricably linked to the politics of resource ownership, its mode of appropriation and use. In other words, conflicts over oil-bearing environment are directly linked to the social relations that underpin the exploration and production of oil and gas in this volatiles region. As the renowned British environmentalist, Andrew Rowell (1994), elaborates:

Oil and environmental conflicts are rooted in the inadequate social relations of production and distribution of profits from oil, and its adverse impact on the fragile ecosystem of the Niger Delta. It involves the Nigerian state and oil companies on one side and six million people of the estimated eight hundred oil-producing communities concentrated in the seventy thousand square kilometres, on the other.

The first level of conflict over the environment is that between oil companies and the oil producing communities and centres on corporate neglect, environmental degradation and disruption of social and economic life, lack of developmental projects and violation of human rights, compensation, employment opportunities and contracts, amongst others. According to a Shell-commissioned study, land acquisition, oil spill compensation, hiring and contracting are aspects of Shell's and, by extension, other oil companies' policies that can "feed into, or

even create conflict” (WAC Global Services, 2003). For instance, the state-owned petroleum company, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), puts the amount of oil spilled into the environment yearly at 2, 300 cubic metres with an average of 300 individual spills annually (Ero, 2008: 56). The UNDP’s Niger Delta Development Report of 2006 has revealed that the region recorded over 6, 800 oil spills between 1976 and 2001, with a loss of approximately 3 million barrels of oil (UNDP, 2006). These statistics are buttressed by Amnesty International’s report that, between 1960 and 2010, a period of 50 years, the oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta have experienced oil spills equal to the Exxon Valdez every year. According to the report, between 9 million and 13 million barrels had been spilled during the period (Amnesty International, 2009). A more recent report emanating from the Ministry of Environment underscores, not only the scale of oil spillage in the region, but also the accuracy of data in this respect. According to the then Minister of Environment, Mr John Odey, Nigeria recorded 3, 203 cases of oil spillages in the country between 2006 and 2010. The minister revealed that out of the above-reported cases 23 per cent were caused by equipment failure, operational/maintenance error and corrosion, while 45 per cent of the oil spillages that occurred were attributed to sabotage/vandalism (Lawrence, Musari and Okara, 2010: 1). What is clear from the foregoing is that oil spills are widespread in the Niger Delta and a good number of the spills that occur are not reported at all.

From the perspective of oil companies, spills are products of sabotage perpetrated by oil thieves and other criminal gangs, rather than equipment failure as the inhabitants of the region are wont to argue. With many of the pipes rusty with age, it would seem to make good business for oil companies like Shell operating in the region to claim that majority of their oil spills are caused by sabotage since such claims legally absolves them from the obligation of compensating affected communities or injured parties. This is not to deny the existence of oil thieves in the creeks, who commit acts of vandalism as part of their criminal enterprise. Critics have argued that some of these acts of vandalism have been known to have been perpetrated with the connivance of oil company workers (see Human Rights Watch, 2005). Furthermore, critics have cited lax enforcement of laws in the oil sector and the fact that the Nigerian state regards the companies as the producer of the national wealth as factors that have made it very difficult for the government to control or even sanction these companies. Moreover, it has been observed that state regulatory agencies, such as the Directorate of Petroleum Resources (DPR) charged with the responsibility of monitoring the oil companies have themselves had to rely on oil companies’ equipment and facilities for their monitoring efforts. Shedding further light on this, the executive director of Environmental Rights Action, Nnimmo Bassey, notes:

Recently, I was in conversation with an official of the Directorate of Petroleum Resources and learned that sometimes when they call for pipelines to be replaced, the companies reach out to political officers in Abuja. They inform the officers that if they embark on replacing the pipelines it translate to halting some level of production. Of course the politicians who are more or less drunk on crude oil cash would not want any reduction on the avalanche of naira and dollars and would the regulator's suggestion aside.

Apart from the issue of oil spills, gas flaring constitutes a major source of conflict between local communities and oil companies operating in their areas. It is estimated that as much as 2.5 billion cubic feet of gas per year is flared by the Nigerian state and oil multinational corporations in the Niger Delta. In fiscal terms, this translates to \$2.5 billion in lost revenues to the government of Nigeria. (Amanze, 2009:29). Citing the World Bank report of 2004, Ayodeji Adeyemi (2010) maintains that Nigeria flares 75 per cent of the gas it produces. Indeed, it is mind-boggling to note that the volume of gas flared in Nigeria, according to analysts, approximates the same quantity Trinidad and Tobago utilizes for both domestic use and export (Amanze, 2009: 29). Although gas flaring had been outlawed by the Nigerian government in 1984, the oil companies have nevertheless persisted in this unsavoury practice. Despite the introduction of sanctions, the companies have preferred the cheaper option of flaring gas to adopting gas re-injection techniques which are technologically available. While the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) estimates that there are 117 gas flare sites across the Niger Delta, an independent research conducted by the Department of Microbiology, Abia State University, Nigeria, indicates that that there are over 200 gas flaring sites across the length and breadth of the oil-producing region (Adeyemi, 2010). In 2005, Shell appealed against a High Court ruling that oil companies should end gas flaring, insisting that it would end the practice in 2009, a year after the federal government's flare-out terminal date (*THIS-day*, May 29, 2007:60). However, recent reports emanating from official circles indicate that government is no longer interested in the 2009 flare-out terminal date. The Director of Petroleum Resources (DPR), Mr Osten Olorunshola, justifies government's vacillation on the issue of gas flaring in these terms:

Flaring has dropped. We used to have to have roughly about 25 per cent of our gas flared as at the end of last year [2011], but it has now dropped to 18 per cent. Gas, like you know, is becoming very exciting both in terms of development and revenue generation. We are actively working towards what is called Gas Network Code which is purely a protocol that is going to regulate how the players as well as the molecules interplay within the pipelines. We are also going to regulate that, we are also trying to conclude the codes... (Kalejaye, 2012 :29)

One of the leading local newspapers, in what could be described as a reaction to the Minister's comment, wrote scathing Editorial entitled "The high cost of gas flaring in Nigeria" in which it laments that "Nigeria's tolerant disposition towards the perennial gas flaring in the Niger Delta region has become a constant reminder of the profligacy that attends the management of the country's resources" (*The PUNCH* [Editorial], October 22, 2012: 18). Citing a former military Head of State, the editorial noted that, "Last year [2011], this country flared

over 460 billion standard cubic of gas that, if processed and exported, would have fetched the country over \$2 billion and minimized the health and environmental impact of gas flares”.

According to the Editorial:

It will be missing the point to believe that the multinational oil companies are solely guilty of gas flaring in Nigeria. Since they are all statutorily into joint venture partnerships with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, a government company, it means the Nigerian government is equally culpable in the missed target for the ending of gas flaring.

It can be gleaned from the foregoing that at the root of the conflict between oil communities and the Nigerian government is the latter's habitual equivocation on matters bordering on the very survival of the inhabitants of the oil-producing region. What it further demonstrates is the centrality of the environment as a major source of conflict between the oil companies and host communities. Flowing from this is the second level of conflict which takes place between the Nigerian state and oil-producing communities. Essentially, the dialectics of this conflict revolve around the contradictions between the Nigerian state and the embattle oil minorities in terms of access to centres of political and economic power, control of resources (oil rents), worsening levels of poverty and underdevelopment, widespread unemployment among the youth, social dislocations and the absence of governance. As the UNDP Niger Delta Human Development Report notes, “The critical issue is not only the increasing incidence of poverty, but also the intense feeling among the people of the region that they ought to do better... This to a large extent explains why there is so much frustration and indignation in the region” (UNDP, 2006: 36).

It was the sense of marginalization and deprivation that ultimately led to an upsurge in militant activities marked, as it were, by vandalism of oil industry facilities, especially pipelines, fatal and near-fatal attacks on oil workers as well as hostage-taking by criminal youth groups. Arguably, the most formidable among the numerous militant groups is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which emerged from the ashes of the Dokubo-Asari -led Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF). In 2006, the year that recorded the worst incidence of militancy in the region, Nigeria was losing over 872,000 per day as a result of attacks by MEND on the country's oil pipelines and facilities (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2006). According to The hallmarks of MEND's campaign of violence and destruction were kidnapping of oil company workers, especially expatriates, and blowing up of oil installations. According to Ibiyemi (2009:1) the Nigerian government and its Joint Venture (JV) partners of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) lost a total \$50 billion to the insurgency in the Niger Delta between 2006 and 2009. Similarly, between February 2006 and August 2009, 500 expatriates were kidnapped, while about 89 cases of oil fields located onshore and offshore, including Shell's Bonga oil field were closed down to prevent attacks by the militants (Ibiyemi, 2009:2). A report by the Niger Delta Development Monitoring Corporate

Watch (NIDDEMCOW) showed that 155 persons were kidnapped by militant groups in 2006 alone. This was three years before the late President Yar'Adua granted the amnesty to the militants in 2009. In its 2006 Niger Delta Human Development Report, the UNDP noted that "Hostage-taking is not only a stress on foreign captives, their families and the company they work for, but also a challenge to international diplomacy" UNDP, 2006). With regard to pipeline vandalism, the former Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Sanusi Barkindo, disclosed that Nigeria lost over 174 billion naira to pipeline vandals in over 16, 083 pipeline breaks between 2000 and 2010 (Yusuf, 2010: 21).

The third level of conflict in the Niger Delta is that which occurs between and among communities. As noted, the struggle for the benefits derivable from oil exploitation has been a fundamental factor in the outbreak and exacerbation of inter-and-intra community conflicts in the Delta region. Such benefits usually range from compensations to contracts, to scholarships, infrastructure and to the social status which they confer (Gbemudu, 2006). According to Shell's baseline study (2003):

Access to benefits derived from SCIN's presence is the prominent trigger for company-communities conflict, conflict between communities and conflict within communities. In the resource scarce environment of the Niger Delta, individuals and groups attempt to position themselves to access cash, contracts and legitimacy to mention some. This leads to leadership tussle, conflicts over boundaries between villages, over who are "genuine" inhabitants of villages and over what kind of development projects a community receives.

Across the oil-producing communities, there is a consensus among the people that land acquisition and land ownership are easily the most potential sources of conflict. Several reasons account for this. Agriculture remains the major community-based economic activity in a region where the physical terrain makes arable land a very scarce resource. Moreover, agricultural land degradation occasioned largely by activities of oil companies is severe, and this is further worsened by the fact that population growth across the region is putting intense pressure on available land and other resources. With the advent of oil, the premium on land has become even greater, largely because land ownership now determines if a community is designated as "host" community, a status linked to benefits such as employment opportunities, community development projects and contracting opportunities. The list of oil communities that have been consumed by conflict over "host" community status is numerous and alarming (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2).

Yet another popular expression of inter- and intra-communal conflict that has become familiar among communities across the region, but which is hardly mentioned in the literature, is the non-violent version, typified largely by advocacy, petition writing, and endless legal tussles. With respect to advocacy, communities involved usually attempt to convince the general public within and beyond the oil communities about the justification of their cause relative

to that of an opposing or rival community. As Ikporukpo explains, “it could be verbal, although, in most cases it is published in newspapers” (Ikporukpo, 2003:12) According to him, legal tussle has, over the years, become a very popular expression of conflict in the Niger Delta region.

### 2.3 Internal migration

Internal migration within the context of this study refers to a situation where victims of environmental conflicts are forced to abandon their ancestral homes to the relative safety of places other than their original homelands. Migration in this context is sometimes used interchangeably with displacement because the conditions that precipitate displacement are always those that engender migration (Akopari, 2000). Thus internal migration becomes, in the context of the Niger Delta, a process in the general scheme of environmental conflicts which spring from the crisis of environmental governance in the Niger Delta. The worst cases of internal migration arising from environmental conflicts in the oil-producing communities were recorded in the 1990s under the military regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha, and during the civilian administration (1999 and 2007) of President Olusegun Obasanjo, who was himself a former military head of State between 1976 and 1979. Some of worst cases of internal migration associated with environmental conflicts in the region include the Umuechem-clash, 1990; the Ogoni-Shell crisis, the Ijaw-Illaje conflict, 1998; the Emadike-Epebu conflict, 1998; Kalabari/Bille conflict, 2000/2001; Liama-Shell clash, 2002; The Odi invasion, 1999; the Odioma raid, 2005; to mention a few (see Human Rights Watch, 2002; ERAAction, 2005; Rowell et al, 2005).

Owing to fears about access to resources, forced migrations in the oil-producing communities invariably trigger secondary conflicts between and within communities, thereby generating further environmental stress and insecurity in the region. The major beneficiaries of this kind of situation are usually oil companies and the government since it enables them to divide and rule the communities while oil production continues apace. As should be expected, the communities, especially the most vulnerable members, such as women and children, are often the worst victims of forced migration in the Niger Delta. For instance, the long-drawn conflict between the Nigerian state and Ogoni resulted in the destruction of 30 villages, over 2000 deaths, more than 3000 injured and about 100,000 internal refugees many of whom were forced to migrate to other cities like Port Harcourt, Lagos, Benin, Ibadan, Calabar, Owerri, Aba, Abuja and other places within the country (Wiwa, 1997; Saro-Wiwa, 1999). Others found their way out of the country to places like Republic of Benin, Ghana, Togo and

even to faraway places like Europe and North America under special arrangement with the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC).

### 3. Environmental Conflict in the Niger Delta: Causal Factors

The causative factors behind environmental conflicts are often a complex process that, according to Obi, hinges on issues of access, control, equity, and sustainability (Obi, 1997a:16; Obi, 1997b). These issues, he argues, revolve around ecology and politics, and are linked to the environmental-scarcities conflict or the environmental-scarcities nexus. However, studies by scholars like Klare, Homer-Dixon, Brown and Jacobson have tried to explain environmental conflicts in the Third World in terms of population-conflict nexus. In Homer-Dixon's view, for example, environmental scarcities are "scarcities of vital renewable resources such as soil, water, forests, and fish" and, as he further explains, the human induced resources scarcities may combine with "bulging populations" and "land stress" to cause violent conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1991). As he puts it:

Group-identity conflicts are likely to rise from large scale movements of populations caused by environmental security. As different ethnic and cultural groups are pushed together by these migrations, we should expect people in these groups to see themselves and their neighbours in terms of "we and "they", in other words, they will use identity of their own group to judge the worth of other groups, often negatively. Such attitudes can lead to violence.

It would appear Homer-Dixon is ignorant of the salient issues involved in the debate on environmental conflict, especially in resource-rich, rural pre-capitalist societies like the Niger Delta. If it is granted that a rapidly growing population relative to the available resources can create scarcities and consequently environmental conflict, it should equally be reckoned that this would depend on several factors, including the nature of social forces/actors who are engaged in the struggle to control access to environmental resources, the social distribution of power over environmental resources and the dominant mode of production in that particular environment. These factors are crucial for an objective analysis of the phenomenon of environmental conflict in Niger Delta-type societies. As again Obi expressed:

Apart from the limitation of Homer-Dixon's model which fails to address the structural basis of the environmental scarcities on which the model is constructed, it offers no deep insight into the structural basis of environmental conflict in the developing world. By concentrating on the external manifestations of eco-refugees "spilling across borders and disrupting relations among ethnic groups, r documenting tensions arising between countries over access and control of water resources, while ignoring the economic system which fuels the scarcities in the midst plenty, the very root of conflict is glossed over, and the victim blamed for engaging in violent conflicts which threaten global security (Obi, 1997:16)

The Niger Delta epitomizes the picture portrayed above, because conflicts in the oil communities are a function of the contradictions generated by the expansion of global oil capital as it

plunders the oil-rich environment of the Niger Delta. Despite the benefits that globalization and the market are said to hold for Third World countries, such benefits have yet to find their way to the oil-producing communities of Nigeria; instead, they have witnessed increased exploitation, worsening levels of poverty, lack of basic infrastructure, economic disempowerment, human rights violations, social disorder, absence of governance and ever-deepening integration into the global capitalist market economy.

**Table 3.1: Inter-community conflicts**

<b>Communities involved</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Year</b>
Bassambiri and Ogbolomabiri	L.G.A. (Location of Headquarters )	1997
Akassa and Koluama	Land dispute	2002
Ogu and Bolou		2000
Ke and Bille		2001
Eleme and Okirika	Land dispute	2001
Okirika and Ikwerre	Land dispute	
Ilajes and Ijaws	Territorial/land dispute	1999/1998
Ijaws and Itsekiri's	LGA Creation/ward creation/Territorial/land dispute	2000/2004/ 1991
Andoni and Ogoni		1970/1974/ 1998
Urhobo's and Itsekiri's		1997/1998
Akassa and Egweama		2000
Biseni and Okordia	Land/Oil field	2002
Epebu Versus Emadike	Land	1999/2000
Amabolou and Ayama		2001
Ekeremor and Ogbodobiri	Piracy Issue	2004
Okpoama and Ewoama	Chieftaincy	1998
Biogbolo and Yeneizue	Land	2001
Okpoama and Twon-Brass	Land	1999
Peremabiri and Diebu		
Oluasiri (Nembe) and Orusangama (Kalabiri)	Territorial/land dispute	1994/95
Oleh versus Olomoro	Oil field dispute	1999
Beletiemma versus Liama	Murder of a woman	1997
Opuama and Ofonibiri		2000
Okuruama versus Abuloma	Murder of a woman	2005
Apoi versus Agip	Oil spillage	2003
Choba Youths versus Wibros	Social amenities	2000
Egi Youths versus Agip	Social amenities	
Black Market Crisis Youth versus Military		
Okpoama –Tubu versus Agip	Social responsibilities	
Tebidaba versus Agip	Social responsibilities	
Ikebiri versus Agip	Social responsibilities	1998



Ojobo versus shell SPDC	Violation of MOU. Social responsibilities	1998
Gbarain versus SPDC	Social amenities	1992
Gbarain Oil Field owner versus SPDC	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	1994
Gbarain community versus SPDC	IOGP (EIA)	1992
Rukpokwu versus SPDC	Oil Spillage	2004
Epie communities versus SPDC	Oil spillage	2003
Elekahia Youths versus Nkpogu Youths	Social responsibility	2000
Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer	Resources control, self-determination, convocation of national conference	2004
Niger Delta vigilantee versus Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force	Protection of rights	2004
Obioku versus Odioma	Murder of twelve persons	2005
Olugbobiri vs Ologboro	Oil well field	2002
Opuoma and Oforibiri	Land dispute	2000

Source: Adapted from Nengi James's: "Contemporary Issues and Realities of the Niger Delta Situation: The Demand of Youths Towards Sustenance of Peace." (2005).

Table 3.2: Intra-community conflicts

<b>Communities involved</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Year</b>
Ikanyabiri	Chieftaincy Tussle	2004
Ekeremor	Community Development Committee Leadership (CDC)	2004
Olugbobiri	CDC Leaders	2004
Epebu	Youths Leadership tussle	2004
Bassambiri	Political groups	2003
Imiringi	-	2000
Peremabiri	Control of Community resources (several person killed, houses burnt etc)	2000
Isongufuru versus Teme (Nembe-Ogbolomabiri)	Several killed/houses burnt	2000
Igbomatoru (Intra)	LGA Headquarters location	2001/2002
Enewari	Houses Burnt/destroyed	
Kalabari	Kingship Tussle	2000
Opobo	Kingship Tussle	Settled
Ogbakiri	Several people killed, houses destroyed	

Source: Adapted from Nengi James *Op. Cit.*

## 4. Six Case Studies of Environmental Conflict in the Niger Delta

The six case studies presented here are representative cases meant to highlight the consequences or outcomes of environmental conflicts as they relate especially to population displacement/migration in the Niger Delta. Though the cases here examined are by no means exhaustive, they are none the less illustrative of other environmentally-induced conflicts that have occurred between the state/ oil companies on the one hand, and between the communities, on the other, especially in terms of the magnitude of human and material destruction and the attendant demographic dislocation.

### 4.1 Iko-Shell clash, 1987

The Iko-Shell clash of July 7, 1987, the first reported major clash between a multinational oil company and local host community, occurred after about thirty youths of the village of Iko in Akwa Ibom, allegedly with dangerous weapons “arrived at Utapete oil flow station and chased away a handful of drilling engineers and other workers” (*Newswatch*, 1995, Rowell et al, 2005). For three days, the irate youths occupied the station, completely disrupting the flow of crude oil from the ten oil wells situated in their village. Among their complaints were that Shell’s operations had led to the closure of creeks where fishing used to be practised; that gas flares posed a health hazard to the community, that jobs be created for the youth in the community, and that there be a general improvement on the local environment conditions (Esparza and Wilson, 1999). Two days later (on 9 July), Shell invited the riot police to get rid of the “invaders”. Some forty houses in Iko were destroyed and many of the villagers were consequently displaced (Human Rights Watch, 1999:140). The victims, several hundreds of them, became destitute without shelter, food or clothing. Since neither the government nor oil companies gave any form of assistance to the victims, many of them were consequently forced to seek refuge in makeshift shacks in their farmlands or in the bush, while others fled to the relative safety of the neighbouring villages, towns or states. (Interview with Isaac Osuoka, September 9, 2000 and April, 2005; Interview with Doifie Ola, June 15, 2004; interview with Miabiye, 2005)

The community’s efforts at making Shell pay compensations proved unsuccessful. Eight years later, on 24 August 1995, the community clashed again with Shell. The Mobile Police invaded the village at night, burned down many houses and killed a school teacher, Emmanuel Nelson (HRW 1999: 140). As Esparza and Wilson put it, “This surprise attack taught the community a hard lesson - one it would never forget” (Esparza and Wilson, 1999: 18). If the bloody episode that was enacted at Iko was intended to deter other aggrieved

communities from standing up for their rights, it failed to send that message of deterrence as the people of Umuechem evidently demonstrated.

#### **4.2 The Umuechem-Shell clash, 1990**

Only three years after Iko-Shell clash, another violent and bloody clash occurred between the host community of Etche and Shell Company on 31 July 1990. The Shell-Umuechem clash is reported as the most serious case in which an oil company was directly implicated in the security forces' abuses (HRW, 1999:178). The community had gathered to "peacefully protest the neglect of the community by Shell Petroleum Company" (Abimboye, 1990; also see Saro-Wiwa, 1999; Rowell et al, 2005). Consequently, an SDPC manager, made a written and explicit request for Mobile Police protection (HRW, 1999: 17), leading to the brutal murder of about eighty people including the traditional ruler of the community and the destruction of almost five hundred houses (Saro-Wiwa, 1995; HRW, 1999; Esparza and Wilson, 1999). The police occupied the town for months while most of the community members were forced to seek refuge in the bush or in neighbouring towns and villages. Neither the state nor the oil-prospecting companies felt obliged to compensate the victims of the massacre.

As in the case of people of Iko in 1987, most of the victims of the Umuechem massacre had to take refuge in the bush, where they waited anxiously until the siege ended. Other members of the community fled to neighbouring towns and villages, where they started life afresh. (Interview with Doifie Ola, October 1, 2000; interview with Nengi James, April, 2005, interview with Adaka Inemo, April, 2005). As Abimboye (1990: 23) noted following an investigative mission to the community a few days after the brutal attacks "... Umuechem is like a ghost town. Corpses were abandoned on the streets. Vultures fed on decomposed bodies and dogs cracked bones of villagers that were ordinarily law-abiding. It was like a civil war...The police was on war path, seemingly bent on wiping out the town from the map of Nigeria". It is instructive to stress that neither the state nor the oil companies provided relief materials or temporary shelter for the victims of the bloody campaign. There was also no attempt either by the Nigerian government or by Shell whose actions led to the disaster to compensate the victims of the brutal campaign. Following the Umuechem incident, Shell oil other oil companies operating in the region did publicly claim that they had a lesson from what Shell described as a "regrettable and tragic" incident, subsequent events like the conflict between the French oil company, Elf, and the people of Egi in Bayelsa State, were to prove to the contrary that the oil companies never learned from each other's experience.

### **4.3 The Egi-ELF clash, 1993**

This bloody clash took place between ELF, a French – owned oil company and the seventeen communities that make up the Egi clan in Bayelsa State, where oil was first discovered in Nigeria. Determined to seek redress for decades of neglect and degradation, the aggrieved communities headed towards the flow station with “an assortment of sticks, tree branches, leaves, placards and banners” (Niboro, 1994). On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1995, four months after the community reached an agreement with the company, about nine policemen reportedly under orders to recover a stolen computer from a member of the community came under attack from the local people, who killed one of the policemen involved in the recovery mission in the ensuing melee. On 19 February, the police embarked on a reprisal attack on the community with such devastating brutality that the number of dead remains unknown to this day. As the respected environmental journalist, Ima Niboro, reports, “... Obagi is a ghost town: a dead reminder of the perilous and eternal search for hydrocarbons. Its streets are bare as an empty hand. Fear, like a giant vacuum cleaner has sucked its inhabitant, man, and beast out of their ancestral homes... ” (1994: 14). Journalist Ima Niboro’s graphic description of the Egi the incident was corroborated by a Niger Delta activist, Adaka Inemo, in an interview with him during my field study in Bayelsa State in 2005.

### **4.4 The Ogoni-Shell crisis**

The Ogoni-Shell crisis is, by far, the most well-known environmental campaign of a local community against powerful and highly influential oil major like Shell. It is furthermore a classic case of developmental protest and conflict between an oil company and its host community. With an estimated production of 150,000 barrels of crude oil per day, Ogoni is said to have yielded over nine hundred million barrels of crude oil to Shell in thirty-five years (Yornawue, 2000). Since 1958 when petroleum was first discovered in Ogoni by Shell, “an estimated US hundred billion dollars’ worth of oil and gas has been carted away from Ogoni land” (Saro-Wiwa, 1999; also see Mitee, 2008). In many ways, Ogoni is a perfect example of the transition from “reactive pacifism” to “reactive militancy” that swept the oil-producing communities in the late 1980s. Initially marked by petitions and complaints to the Federal Ministry of Mines and Power (as it was then known) in Lagos and State Ministries in Rivers State, as well as Shell itself, the era of “reactive pacifism,” reflected the optimism of the Ogoni and other oil-producing communities in the potential of oil for economic development in the Delta region. Thus, when the first protest against Shell took place at Kegberekere in Ogoni in 1962, it was localized; and only six community members were rounded up and gaoled for six months for organizing a riot against Shell (Mitee, 1997).

By the 1990s when reactive pacifism turned into reactive militancy, the Ogoni people were already at the forefront of the campaign against human and environmental rights violations by oil majors prospecting for and mining oil in Niger River Delta. This latter period was characterized by demonstrations, protests and occasional violence, with community members attacking, occupying or shutting down oil company installations. During this period, pipeline vandalism became a lucrative enterprise as youths resorted to it as a way of wrenching compensation from oil companies. Describing the situation before the Ogoni people embarked upon reactive militancy in the 1990s, Mitee said, “We were tired of writing petitions to government, endless petitions, and so under the leadership of Ken [Saro-Wiwa], we formed the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People” (Mitee, 1997).

Thus, under the aegis of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), an umbrella organization of several organizations, the Ogoni people launched a non-violent resistance campaign against Shell and its destructive actions in Ogoni. It is instructive to note that the struggle against Shell effectively began in April 1993, when an American company, Wilbros, engaged by Shell, for pipeline construction started bulldozing Ogoni farmlands. This uncaring and irresponsible corporate behaviour triggered a protest from the women, “who held trigs as they had been advised to do to indicate that they were protesting peacefully” (Saro-Wiwa, 1999). In a manner reminiscent of Shell’s action at Umuechem thirteen years before, Wilbros called in the soldiers, “who emptied their ammunition on them”, killing one person and seriously wounding many people, including a mother of five children whose left arm had to be amputated as a result of the gun-shot wound she sustained.

This incident marked the genesis of the breach between some conservative Ogoni politicians and traditional rulers, on the one hand, and the masses of the Ogoni people, who were devoted to MOSOP, on the other. As should be expected, Shell and the Nigerian government took advantage of this breach to divide and rule the Ogoni people. Meanwhile, the traditional rulers and the politicians, backed by the government of Rivers State under Governor Rufus Ada George, issued a couple of press releases in which they disassociated themselves from the activities of MOSOP and roundly denounced the Movement for obstructing the legitimate conduct of any normal business operations in Ogoni and interfering with government security men who were carrying out their legitimate duty of maintaining law and order in Ogoni. The Shell-Ogoni conflict climaxed with the state murder of the MOSOP leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight other members of the Movement in November 1995, following the gruesome killing of four prominent Ogoni Chiefs at Giokoo in May 1994. Although Shell consistently denied (and still denies) any role in the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots, some of the events leading up to the executions showed clearly that the company was prevaricating on the issue

of the Ogoni Nine, as Ken Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots were popularly referred to in the Nigerian press.

As it happened, Shell was at this time enmeshed in a series of arms importation scandals relating to its operations in Ogoni. Although Shell did grudgingly admit to purchasing 107 handguns for its supernumerary police two decades earlier, the company argued that the guns in question were not its property but that of the Nigeria Police. Hardly had the dust settled on the arms importation scandal when another weapons importation-related scandal broke out implicating Shell in a deal for the procurement of more than half a million dollars' worth of upgraded weapons for its security force. As human rights groups discovered in the course of their investigations, the weapons in question did not match the purposes that Shell had claimed they were intended to serve. As Bronwen Manby comments, "the weapons on order – Baretta semi-automatic rifles, pump action shot guns and materials such as tear gas clearly designed for crowd control – did not seem appropriate for protection from armed robbers and general crime" (see Human Rights Watch, 1999).

As if the situation was not already bad enough, fresh scandals came to light revealing the extent of Shell's involvement in the Ogoni crisis, nay the Niger Delta crises. While on a visit to London the head of the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force (RSISTF), Major (Later Lt. Col.) Okuntimo, was reported to have told the London *Times* that Shell was providing regular field allowances to the RSISTF (Okonta and Douglas, 2001, Rowell et al, 2005 ; Peel, 2011), an allegation Shell strongly denied, although it reluctantly owned up to "paying field allowances to the Nigerian military on two separate occasions in 1993 when protesters were killed and wounded"(Human Rights Watch, 1999). What is clear is that the oil companies operating in the Nigeria not sponsor military personnel in the Niger Delta, but also use their heft to manipulate the Nigerian state and its officials. This fact was contained in the secret cables from the US embassy in Abuja, released by Wikileaks, alluding to Shell's "tight grip" on the Nigerian State. For instance, in August 2012, the oil industry watchdog Platform, based on leaked Shell documents, revealed that nearly \$383 million was doled out between 2007 and 2009 for the protection of its corporate interests in the Niger Delta (Akpe, 2012:40). According to the report, about \$65 million of this sum funded 1, 300 armed forces drawn from the Nigerian military and the mobile police, notoriously known as "Kill and Go". In the parlance of oil companies and the Nigerian government, these military personnel are designated as being on "special duties".

It was against this backdrop of widespread dissatisfaction with and condemnation of Shell's corporate activities in the Delta region that the company, together with its counterparts, decided to adopt a policy shift away from "community assistance" to "sustainable community development". Despite this paradigm shift, Shell's track record in terms of sustainable exploitation of

oil and gas in the region, corporate social responsibility and human rights has not been spectacular (see Okwechime, 2011; Uwafioku, 2011). This view is further buttressed by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) report on the contamination of Ogoniland. The report was an independent scientific assessment of the area over a 14-month period during which the team conducted detailed investigations in over 200 places, surveyed 122 kilometres of Right of Way, received over 5,000 medical and engaged more than 23,000 people at local committee meetings. The study also involved detailed soil and groundwater contamination investigations at 69 locations which ranged in size from 1,300 square metres as in Barabeedom-K-Dere, Gokana Local Government Area to 79 hectares as in Ajeokpori in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State. Also analysed were over 400 samples including water taken from 142 groundwater monitoring wells drilled specifically for and soil extracted from 780 boreholes in the area (Adedoja, Alike, Ogbu, 2011: 1). The findings of the report showed that in the 49 sites that were examined by the team, soils were heavily polluted with hydrocarbons up to a depth of five metres. In 10 Ogoni communities, drinking water was found to be highly contaminated with high levels of hydrocarbon. In Nissioken Ogale community, for example, the drinking water was found to contain benzene, a known cancer-causing chemical, 900 times above the level stipulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Adedoja, Alike, Ogbu, 2011: 6). Based on these startling findings, the report concluded that it would take as long as 30 years to clean up the pollution at an estimated cost of \$1 billion. It is worth noting that since August 2011 when it received the UNEP report on “Oil Pollution in Ogoniland”, the federal government has yet to take any concrete step to address the life threatening issues identified in the report. Government’s apparent inaction only underlines the popular suspicion of entrenched policy of between exploiting petroleum companies and corrupt regimes, which have perpetuated the external and internal cultures of exploitation and alienation in the Niger Delta.

#### **4.5 Ijaw Youth Council versus Shell and the state**

Kaiama, the hometown of Major Isaac Adaka Boro, the Ijaw rebel soldier, who declared a Niger Delta Republic on 23 February 1966, is situated on the mainland of Bayelsa State in Nigeria’s Delta region. Kaiama is reckoned as the hotbed of Ijaw activism and is also the historic town where Ijaw youths “drawn from over 500 communities from over 40 clans that make up the Ijaw nation and representing 25 representative organizations” (Ijaw Youth Council, 1998: 6) met, on 11 December 1998, to adopt the resolutions known as the Kaiama Declaration. The Kaiama Declaration called on “all oil companies staff and contractors to withdraw from Ijaw territories by the 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1998 pending the resolution of the issue of resource ownership and control in the Ijaw areas of the Niger Delta” (Ijaw Youth Council, 1998: 9)

The showdown started on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1998, when armed soldiers opened fire on Ijaw youths protesting against oil company neglect and degradation of their environment subsequently, thousands of troops and navy personnel were brought into the region in response to these protests (HRW, 1999). Mbiama, Imiringi, Yenogoa and Patani were invaded (see Ijaw Youth Council 1998: 14; Okonta 1999b; Rowell et al, 2005; Tamuno; 2011), and more than 30 youths were reported to have been shot dead by security forces (Niboro, 1999:22); Okonta 1999b; HRW, 1999; Rowell et al, 2005; Peel, 2011; Tamuno, 2011). As Niboro (1999) puts it: “Kaiama was sacked by the victorious soldiers as the aged, the young and the innocent were driven into the bush along with the defected warriors”. The emergence of a host of militant groups such as the Dokubo Asari-led NDPVF and MEND in Ijawland was partly a by-product of the Kaiama episode and partly a result of the social contradictions spurned by oil capital in a predominantly rural agrarian society.

#### **4.6 The Odi invasion, 1999**

The Odi massacre took place nine months after the Kaiama bloodbath. It is widely credited to be the bloodiest encounter between state security forces and a host oil community, since the Umuechem massacre of 1990. The invasion was sequel to the suspected killing of 12 policemen by local youths protesting against the neglect of their community by Shell. In response, the Federal government deployed military troops to Odi to capture the hoodlums that had perpetrated the killings. Frustrated by their inability to locate and capture the culprits, the security operatives laid siege to Odi town ostensibly to punish it for harbouring the gangsters that had slain 12 of their colleagues in cold blood. The invasion left 3,000 housing units in ruins and about 50, 000 inhabitants of Odi as refugees (Nwankpa 1999: 2; Rowell et al, 2005; Ikelegbe, 2010). According to Don – Pedro (1999: 19) “...only about four buildings including the First Bank building, St. Stephen’s Anglican Church and the Health Centre stand, roof in place. The rest of the town, which before the invasion and massacre was the second largest in Bayelsa state ... lay in ruins”.

The Odi invasion came as a shock to the human rights community both within and outside the country for several reasons. First, the invasion occurred only six months after the inauguration of a democratically elected government headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo who, at his inaugural had pledged to seek a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the region. Secondly, it was generally expected that the dawn of a democratically elected civilian government in the country would mark a clean break from the kind of military operations that had characterized preceding military regimes. Finally, the military operation against Odi, it was argued, would be counter-productive as it would only lead to further bloody clashes between other



militant groups and the security forces. It was furthermore ill-conceived having coming as it did when Nigeria was being rehabilitated into the comity of nations, following the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha and his military onslaughts against MOSOP, which climaxed in the killing of its leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his compatriots in November 1995.

**Table 4.1: Oil Companies/Communities Conflicts**

S/No	Date	Community/ LGA	State	Cause of action	Outcome
1.	1971	Ejamah-Ebubu (Ogoni)	Rivers	Oil Spill	Destruction of farmlands threatening flora and fauna
2.	1976-1996		Bayelsa State	Oil Spills and Pollution	Statistics from the DPR indicates that between 1976 and 1996 a total of 4835 incidents resulted in the spillage of at least 2,446,322 barrels (102,7million US gallons).
3.	May 8, 1997	Elele-Alimini	Rivers State	Oil Spill at Mininta-Rumuekpe pipeline	Oil production generates conflicts. Large area of farmland, fishponds destroyed shell alleged it was caused by the tenant family.
4.	March 27, 1998	Jones Creek Flow station	Delta State	Oil spills at Jones Creek identified by Shell as pipeline failure.	20,000 barrels (840,000 U.S gallons) killing large number of fish.
5.	1987	Iko	Akwa Ibom	Series of disturbances in Iko following a protest against Shell	Mobil Police burnt down 40 houses
6.	1976-1996		Bayelsa State	Oil Spills and Pollution	Statistics from the DPR indicates that between 1976 and 1996 a total of 4835 incidents resulted in the spillage of at least 2,446,322 barrels (102.7 million U.S gallons).
7.	October 30-31, 1990	U-muechem-Etche	Rivers	Protest by youths against total neglect by SPDC and Government of Nigeria	The community was razed by mobile policemen. Over 100 people were killed and 495 houses destroyed.
8.	October 1998	Jesse	Delta	Pipeline explosion	More than 1000 people died
9.	July 2000	Adje near Warri	Delta	Pipeline explosion	Several hundred people died
10.	November 1999	Odi	Bayelsa	That on November 4, 1999 an armed gang killed seven Nigerian policemen in Odi	Soldiers move into Odi and razed the community, 2483 people, including women and children died.
11.	July 10, 2005	Ikarama – Yengoa LGA	Bayelsa	Oil Spill	Serious impact on the flora and fauna including their arable land and swamp.
12.	February 19, 2005 (Sa-	Odioma	Bayelsa	Payment of compensation to Bassambiri instead of Odioma by shell Petroleum Development Compa-	More than 18 people were killed.

	tuesday)			ny	
13.	July, 2005	Bille Pro-test	River	The community said that for 47 years Shell has been prospecting oil and gas in their locality and that they have nothing to show for their economic contribution to the nation (Nigeria) except impact.	Ecological violence through environmental pollution, destruction of the ecosystem health problems.
14.	October 14, 2000	Olugbobiri Southern Ijaw	Bayelsa	Unarmed youths approached the Tebidaba flow station to protest the failure of NAOC to complete certain agreed projects in the Olugbobiri community.	Soldiers and Naval personnel at the flow station opened fire on the boasts conveying the youths. 8 were killed and another died later in hospital. Several bodies were not recovered and more than 16 persons were injured.
15.	January 1999	Ikeremor Zion, Opia and Ikenya	Delta	Armed soldiers aided and abetted by Chevron Nigeria limited raided the communities belonging to the Ijaw people.	The communities were burnt down leaving several people dead and injured.
16.	Jan. 30 1999	Ogulagha	Delta	Youths demanding for employment in recognition of the Kaiama declaration.	Many youths were shot and 19 died with many injured.
17.	May 17, 1999	Kokodi-agbene	Delta	Soldiers escorting Shell barge	Killed two youths of the Ijaw extraction.
18.	May 28 1998	Parabe platform	Ondo	120 youths from Ilaje community went to the Chevron offshore drilling facility known as Parabe Platform where they requested to meet with Chevron officials to demand compensation for environmental damage caused by canals cut from Chevron.	Nigeria Navy and Mobile Police fired the demonstrators killing two people. Jolly Ogungbeje and Arolika Iro-warinun.

19.	December 2003	Rukpok-wu –Obio-Akpor LGA	Rivers	Oil Spill	Fish ponds, farmlands and livelihood are seriously devastated.
20.		Ekeni-Ezetu	Bayelsa	Non implementation of MOU by Texaco	Chevron-Texaco operates here.

**Source:** Adapted from DSP Alamiyeseigha’s lecture on “Energy, Environment and Disaster: The Niger Delta Experience.” (2005).

## 5. Conclusion

The thrust of this paper has been an investigation of environmental conflicts and internal displacement in the Niger Delta. It was established that internal migration in the Niger Delta

region of Nigeria is spawned by environmental conflicts occasioned by environmental degradation. The oil communities sought, initially, to reclaim their rights to the environment through grass roots mobilization based on non-violent protests and campaign. The Ogoni struggle under the auspices of MOSOP typified this pattern of agitation. The brutish killing of the MOSOP leader and his co-activists by the Nigerian state was indeed clear indication to other groups in the region that the Nigerian state was not interested in dialogue, and that it was, to all intents and purposes, prepared to decimate the Niger Delta population in defence of global capital in the region.

This was the context that saw the emergence of reactive militancy in the region as championed by Ijaw youths under the aegis of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) and later, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) of Ateke Tom, and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). The *modus operandi* of these Ijaw-based militant groups lay basically in attacks on oil installations and disruption of oil production and supplies, hostage-taking and bombing became a means of registering their age-long grievances against a state that they perceived as alien, exploitative and oppressive. For irate youths armed resistance was the only option that can compel the state and oil companies to adopt a more responsive and socially responsible attitude towards the welfare of host communities from whose soil and waters the wealth of the nation and profits of the multinational oil corporation are generated.

The case studies presented in analysis showed that environmental conflict and internal migration were direct products of oil industry operations in the ecologically fragile Niger Delta environment. The deep-seated nature of the contradictions spawned by oil company activities in the fabric of the Delta society can only be summed up with a local saying to the effect that, although oil pollution can be cleaned up, the pollution of the community cannot.

## References

### Interviews

Mr Adaka Inemo, an environmental activist and former staff of Environmental Rights Action, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. He was interviewed in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, in April 2005.

Mr Doifio Ola, Niger Delta activist. He was interviewed on June, 2004, in Lagos.

Mr Isaac Asume Osuoka, human and environmental rights activist and former spokesman of Ijaw Youth Council. He was interviewed in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, in April 2005.

Mr Kuromiema Miabiye, former Secretary General and former President, Ijaw Youth Council (IYC). He was interviewed in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, in April, 2005.

Mr Nengi James, an activist and Executive Director Niger Delta Development Monitoring and Corporate Watch, Yenagoa, Baselsa State. He was interviewed in Yenagoa, Bayelsa in April 2005.

## References

- Abimboye, Demola (1990) "Massacre at Dawn", *African Guardian*, Lagos, December 3.
- Adedaja, Tokunbo, Ejiofor Alike and Ahamefula Ogbu (2011) "UN: Cleaning Ogoniland Pollution Could Take 30 Years: Report Indicts Shell, ERA Seeks \$100 bn Fund", *THISday*, Lagos, August 5.
- Adeyemi, Ayodeji (2008) "Black Gold as a Curse", *Tell*, Lagos, August 16.
- Adelaja, Tokunbo, Ejiofor Alike and Ahamefula Ogbu (2011) "UN: Cleaning Up Ogoniland Pollution Could Take 30 Years", *THISday*, Lagos, August 5.
- Akpe, Ameto (2012) "In the Eyes of the Ogoni", *BUSINESSDAY*, Lagos, 27 September.
- Akokpari, J.K. (2000) "The Political Economy of Migration", *Journal of Identity, Culture and Politics*, Vol.1, No. 1. pp.57-77
- Alagoa, Ebigberi Joe (2004) *The Uses of Hindsight and as Foresights: Reflections on Niger Delta and and Nigerian History*, Port Harcourt: Onyoma Publications.
- Amadi, Elechi (1968) *The Great Ponds*, Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Amanze, Chinka (2009) "Gas Flaring: FG May Extend Deadline", *THISday*, Lagos, December, 21.
- Amnesty International (2005) "Nigeria: Ten Years On: Injustice and Violence Haunt the Oil Delta", Amnesty International AFR 44/025/2005 (Public) News Service.
- Amnesty International (2005) "Nigeria: Claiming Rights and Resources: Injustice, Oil and Violence in Nigeria", Amnesty International AFR 44/025/2005 (Public) News Service.
- Amnesty International (2009) "Nigeria: Petroleum, Poverty and Pollution in the Niger Delta", London: Amnesty International.
- Azaiki, Steve (2003) *Inequities in Nigerian Politics: The Niger Delta, Resource Control, Underdevelopment and Youth Restiveness*, Yenagoa: Treasure Books.
- Don-Pedro, I. (1999) "Odi and the Metaphor of Sledge Hammer", *The Guardian*, Lagos, December 30.
- Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth (2002) *A Blanket of Silence: Images of Odi Genocide*, Benin: Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth.
- Ero, Adekunmbi (1997) "50 Years of Oil is Shit", *Tell*, Lagos, February 18.

- Ero, Adekunmbi (2010) "Echoes from the Wasteland", *Tell*, Lagos, August 16.
- Esparza, L. and Wilson, M. (1999) *Oil for Nothing: Multinational Corporations, Environmental Destruction, Death and Impurity in the Niger Delta*, USA: Inkworks Press.
- Gbemudu, Emma (2006) "New Dawn for Resettled Communities", *Daily Independent*, Lagos, March 24.
- Homer-Dixon, Thomas (1998) "Environmental Security and Inter-group", in Michael T. Klare et al. (Eds.) *World Security Challenges for a New Century*, New York: St. Martins Press, Third Edition, pp. 342-365.
- Human Rights Watch (1999) *The Price of Oil: Corporate Responsibility and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria's Oil Producing Communities*, USA: Human Rights Watch.
- Human Rights Watch (2002) *The Niger Delta: No Democratic Dividend*, Washington: Human Rights Watch, Vol.14, No. 7, pp. 2-38.
- Human Rights Watch (2005) "Rivers and Blood: Guns, Oil and Power in Nigeria's Rivers State", A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, February, pp. 2-23.
- Ibiyemi, Samuel (2009) "FG, JV Partners Lose N8 to N/Delta Unrest", *Financial Standard*, Lagos, August 3.
- Ifeka, Caroline (2001) "Oil, NGOs and Youth Struggles for Resource Control in the Niger", *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 87, pp. 98-105.
- Ikelegbe, Augustine O. (2010) *Oil, Resource Conflicts and the Post-conflict Transition in the Niger Delta Region: Beyond the Amnesty*, Benin City: Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CEPED).
- Ikporukpo, Chris (2003) "When Victims become destroyers: The Oil Industry and Communal Self-destruction in the Niger Delta", *ERAction*, July-September.
- Lawrence, Florence, Abosede Musari and Roseline Okara (2010) "Nigeria Records 3, 203 Oil Spillage Cases in Four Years", *The Guardian*, Lagos, August 24.
- Maier, Karl (2000) *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*, London: Penguin Books.
- Manby, Bronwen (1999) "The Role and Responsibility of Oil Multinationals in Nigeria", *Journal of International Affairs*, Fall 53, No 1, pp. 281-301.
- Mitee, Ledum (1997) "Why MOSOP Exile can't return", *THISDAY*, September 19.
- Mitee, Ledum (1997) "Why I fled Nigeria", *The PUNCH*, Lagos, November 9.
- Niboro, Ima (1994) "Boom for Some, Doom for Others", *The African Guardian*, Lagos, January 31.
- Niboro, Ima (1999) "War Against the Niger Delta", *Tell*, Lagos, December 18.
- Niger Delta Development Survey (NDES) (2000), *Niger Delta Development Priorities and Action Plan, Phase II Report, Vol. 2*.
- Obayinwa, Osasu (2012) "The Rape of Paradise", *New African*, January.

Obi, Cyril (1999) *The Crisis of Environmental Governance in The Niger Delta 1985-1996*, Occasional Paper Series, Volume 3, No. 3, pp. 3-33.

Obi, Cyril (1997a) "Economic Adjustment and Deepening of Environmental Conflict in Africa", *Lesotho Social Science Review*, Volume 3, No. 1.

Obi, Cyril (1997b) "Globalization and Local Resistance: The case of the Ogoni versus Shell", *New Political Economy*, Vol. 2, No. 1.

Obi, Cyril (2000) "Globalized Images Of Environmental Security In Africa", *Review Of African Political Economy*, No. 83: pp. 47-62.

Obi, Cyril and Iwebunor Okwechime (2004) "Globalization and Identity Politics: The Emerging Pattern of Inter-ethnic Relations in Nigeria's Niger Delta", in: Duro Oni, Suman Gupta, Tope Awoniyi, Efurosibina Adegbija and Segun Awonusi (Eds.), *Nigeria and Globalization: Discourses in Identity Politics and Social Conflict*, Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, pp. 343-369.

Oke, Babatunde (2008) "Niger Delta: 199 Persons Kidnapped in 2007", *New Star*, Lagos, January 29.

Okonta, Ike and Oronto Douglas (1999a) *Where Vultures Feast: 40 Years of Shell in the Niger Delta*, Benin: Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth.

Ikime, Obaro (2005) *History, The Historian and The Nation (The Voice Of A Nigerian Historian)*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria Publishers Plc.

Kalejaye, Kunle (2012) "Nigeria's Oil Reserve Stands at 36.2bn Barrels: Gas Flare Drops 18 Per cent", *Vanguard*, Lagos, November 6.

Okwechime, Iwebunor (2011) "Oil Multinationals and the Politics of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Niger Delta", in: Akin Alao and Rotimi Taiwo (Eds.), *Perspectives on African Studies: Essays in Honour of Toyin Falola*, Muenchen: LINCOM Publishers, pp. 2-38.

Onosode, Gabriel (2003) *Environmental Issues and Challenges of the Niger Delta: Perspective from the Niger Delta*, Lagos: Lily Bank Property and Trust Limited.

Osuntokun, Akinjide (1999) *Environmental Problems of Nigeria*, Davidson Press, Ibadan, in association with the Fredrick Ebert Foundation, University of Lagos.

Peel, Michael (2011) *A Swamp Full of Dollars: Pipelines and Paramilitaries at Nigeria's Oil Frontier*, London: I.B. Tauris.

Roberts, Nyemutu F.O. (2005) "Environment and Livelihood in the Niger Delta", in: Kayode Fayemi, Stella Amodi, Ololade Bamidele (Eds.), *Towards an Integrated Development of the Niger Delta*, Lagos: Centre for Democracy and Development, pp. 77-156.

Rowell, Andrew (1994) *Shell-Shocked: The Environmental and Social Costs of Living With Shell in Nigeria*, Greenpeace Report, July.

Rowell, Andrew, James Marriott and Lorne Stockman (2005) *The Next Gulf: London, Washington and Oil Conflict in Nigeria* (London: Constable and Robinson).

Saro-Wiwa, Ken (1995) *A Month and A Day: A Detention Diary*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.

Tamuno, Takena N. (1999) “On The Niger Delta Question”, Lecture delivered under the Joint auspices of the Rivers State College of Art and Science, Port Harcourt, and the River State University of Science and Technology, Nkpolu, Port Harcourt, in: *The Guardian*, November 30.

Tamuno, Takena N. (2011) *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta: 1849-2009*, Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers Ltd.

The Ijaw Youth Council (1999) *The Kaiama Declaration*, Port Harcourt: Ijaw Youth.

*The PUNCH* (2012) [Editorial] “The High Cost Cost of Flaring Gas in Nigeria”, October 22.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006) *Niger Delta Human Development Report*, Abuja: United Nations Development Programme.

Uwafiokun, Idemudia (2010) “Corporate Social Responsibility and the Rentier Nigerian State: Rethinking the Role of Government and the Possibility of Corporate Social Development in the Niger Delta”, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 30, nos. 1-2, pp. 131-152.

Uwafiokun, Idemudia (2011) “Corporate Social Responsibility and the Niger Delta Conflict: Issues and Prospects”, in: Cyril Obi and Siri Aas Rustad (Eds.), *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complex Politics of Petro-violence*, London: Zed Books, pp. 167-183.

WAC Global Services (2003) *Peace and Security in the Niger Delta: Conflict Expert Group Report*, Working Paper for SPDC, December.

Wiwa, Diana (1997) “The Role of Women in the struggle for Environmental Justice in Ogoni”, *Delta*, October.

Yornawue, Psaro (2000) “Ogoni Produces 150,000 Barrels of Oil day-Don”, *The Guardian*, Lagos, June 1.

Yusuf, Adeola (2010) “Nigeria Loses N174b to Pipeline Vandals in 10 Years”, *Daily Independent*, Lagos, March 3.