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# Hydrocarbon Extraction: Corporate Social Irresponsibility and Despoiled Milieu in the Niger Delta

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**Abstract:** Corporate responsibility is an issue that is very important to business organisations in other climes, especially in developed countries. This is because an organisation that fails to care or contribute to its environmental needs may not survive for long. The concept of social responsibility, therefore, is the need for businesses to take responsibility for problems; social, economic and even political to aid the growth and development of its environment. The best way to do this is to ensure "best practice" in their operations. However, contrary to the above norm, the oil multinational in their extraction activities have operated outside the tenets of corporate responsibility, hence their failure to care for their operational areas in the Niger Delta. In their operations in the Niger Delta, the oil multinationals appears driven only by the profit motive; minimum investment for maximum profit in contrast to their operations in other climes. As, a result, the oil multinational have not only been nonchalant in their operations but have wreak severe havoc on the environment.

**Keywords:** Hydrocarbon Extraction, Niger Delta.

## INTRODUCTION

A key concern with regard to Multi-National Corporations (MNC) is their mobile nature. Usually, they tend to establish subsidiaries in countries where conditions are most favourable to their business operations. Furthermore, in their negotiations with the government of the host country, their ability to pick up and leave provides them with a great deal of leverage over countries dependent on the jobs they provide. Though their host countries do have some bargaining power, however, the concerns of most host countries over how MNCs operate in their country often, take a back burner to investment concerns, particularly in developing countries, where economies are often weak. Therein lies the risk of exploitation, as some of these large corporations are more important economic actors in global affairs than are many host countries. The operations of the oil multinational companies in the Niger Delta seem to be outside the tenets of corporate responsibility. This may account for their utter disregard for the environment and the people in their operations. Thus, they use different yardstick for their operations in developing countries. According to (Bérubé, N., & Aquin, B. 2005), despite the fact that its production and usage was banned in the US, the banana companies Dole, Del Monte and Chiquita used a carcinogenic pesticide, Nemagon, to protect their crops in Nicaragua in the '70s and '80s. Today, the men and women who worked on those plantations suffer from incurable illnesses, while their children are deformed. The companies feign innocence.

Like Nicaragua, Nigeria is an exemplar of irresponsible oil development. For over six decades, the oil companies have operated with no accountability, partnered with repressive regimes bent on exploiting Nigeria's oil wealth for the benefit of corrupt elite. Oil-related environmental and human rights abuses have been commonplace. Scientists have showed that crude oil carry very heavy metallic properties, which find their way into water bodies in the region; accumulating in fishes and other aquatic animals (Benson, N. U. *et al*., 2007; Daka, E. R. *et al*., 2008; Kanayochukwu, N. J. *et al*., 2010; Nwani, C. D. *et al*., 2010; Godwin, J. *et al*., 2011). Humans slowly get poisoned by eating fish and other aquatic products so poisoned. Mothers who eat such contaminated marine foods are more likely to give birth to premature and deformed babies (Newswatch, 1990). Thus, the problem of oil companies with their host communities relates to the exploitation, exploration, production and exportation of crude oil, which is the source and cause of the predicament of the people of the Niger-Delta region. Life expectancy barely tops 51 years. Many of the 74% of Nigeria's population living below the poverty line live in the oil rich Niger Delta (Turner, T. 1978; Turner, T. 1980; Turner, T. E., & Badru, P. 1985; Banfield, J. 1998; Osadolor, O. B. 2002; & Watts, M. 2007). A skyrocketing AIDS pandemic (Udonwa, N. E. *et al.*, 2004; Emuedo, C. O. 2010; & Emuedo, C. O. *et al.*, 2017) elevates mortality rates to the point that accurate measurements are nearly impossible (CIA World Factbook, 2000).

The attitude of the multinationals towards the environment and the concomitant negative effects on the people, may have accounted for several writers assertion that well-endowed natural resource and resource-dependent states are often, prone to violence (Humphreys, M. 2005; Ross, M. L. 2004; Ross, M. 2006; & Elbadawi, I. A., & Soto, R. 2015). Nigeria, no doubt gives fillip to the above assertion, as its oil enclave the Niger Delta has since the early 1990s been epicentre of violence (Hutchful E. 1985; Frynas, J. G. 2000; Obi, C. I. 2001; Sala-i-martin, X., & Subramanian, A. 2003; Zalik, A. 2004; Olusakin, A. M. 2006; Omeje, K. 2006; Eweje, G. 2006; Watts, M. 2007; Hazen, J. M., & Horner, J. 2007; Ikein, A. A. *et al.*, 2008; & Maehler, A. 2010). The violence caused massive disruption in oil production that adversely impacted oil revenues receipts by the state (Obi, C. 1992; Cesarz, E. *et al.*, 2003; Amadi, S. *et al.*, 2006; Courson, E. 2007; Watts, M. 2007; Watts, M. (Ed.). 2008; Kashi, E., & Watts, M. (Ed.). 2008; Emuedo, C. O. 2010; Emuedo, C. 2012; & Emuedo, C. 2014). This is because the defining characteriser of the relationship between oil multinationals and oil-host communities in the region has been that of impunity of operations and exploitation with concomitant consequence for violence (Emuedo, C. O. *et al.*, 2007), which now engulf the region. The resort to acts of violence have been largely attributed to the disregard of oil companies to peaceful entreaties and their absolute disdain for the people of their host communities arising from their collaboration with federal government agents. This assertion was confirmed by Opusunji, spokesman of Kula youths while giving reason for their storming of an oil flow station in Bayelsa State. He was quoted as saying “the saddest thing was that the companies carry on in the area as though they were more powerful than the state government. On several occasions the state government had directed that they comply with the contents of the GMoU, but they have completely ignored it (Onoyume, J. 2006). The government on her part has also not helped matters much with regard to her policies (in the oil sector) regarding companies and their environment unlike some other countries. For instance, in Malaysia, “the oil companies were made to adopt the concept of “We Care, We Share” approach right from the onset’. Thus, citing examples like Union Carbide’s gas leak in Bhopal, India that killed about 15,000 people and Shell Oil’s link with human rights abuses and pollution in Nigeria, NGOs say international binding rules for corporations are long overdue (UNCTD, 2003).

## Theories and Principles of Corporate Social Responsibility

The concept of *corporate responsibility* or *corporate social responsibility* has acquired broad support in various international fora. While there is no universally accepted definition of the concept, there is however a consensus that it implies a demonstration of certain responsible behaviour on the part of governments and the business sector toward society and the environment. According to (Barnard, C. I. 1938), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) “analyses economic, legal, moral, social and physical aspects of environment”. The broadest definition of corporate social responsibility is concerned with “what is” or “should be” the relationship between multinational corporations, governments of countries and their individual citizens. Locally the definition is concerned with the relationship between a corporation and the local society in which it resides or operates. Another definition is concerned with the relationship between a corporation and its stakeholders. There is however no agreed definition of CSR so this raises the question as to what exactly can be considered to be corporate social responsibility. According to the EU Commission (2002), CSR as a concept allows companies to integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.”

One of the challenges of defining the concept of CSR is identifying a consistent and sensible definition from among a confusing range of definitions that have been proposed in the literature (Reinhardt, F. L. *et al.*, 2008). It has been asserted that a large number of companies seem ever more engaged in a serious effort to integrate CSR into all aspects of their businesses (Zu, L., & Song, L. 2009). (Buchholz, R. A. 1991) identified five key elements found in most, if not all, definitions. These are; (1) corporations have responsibilities that go beyond the production of goods and services at a profit, (2) these responsibilities involve helping to solve important social problems, especially those they have helped create, (3) corporations have a broader constituency than stockholders alone, (4) corporations have impacts that go beyond simple marketplace transactions and (5) corporations serve a wider range of human values than can be captured by a sole focus on economic values. Despite the plethora of definitions a basic problem is that none has been clearly and universally accepted, making theoretical development and measurement difficult (Hopkins, M. 2004; McWilliams, A. *et al.*, 2006; Sriramesh, K. *et al.*, 2007; & Ismail, T. N. T. 2011). Some writers (Reinhardt, F. L. *et al.*, 2008; Bénabou, R., & Tirole, J. 2010) adopted the definition of CSR given by (Elhauge, E. R. 2005), which states; “sacrificing profits in the social interest”. Sacrifice, implies that the firm must on its own volitions go beyond its legal and contractual obligations. CSR thereby embraces a wide range of behaviours, such as being employee friendly, environment friendly, mindful of ethics, respectful of communities where the firm’s plants are located and even investor friendly.

Thus, rather than giving one, listing the key elements found in various definitions may be more insightful. As (Wood, D. J. 1991) opines, the "basic idea of corporate social responsibility is that business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities" and that expectations are placed on business due to its three roles: as an institution in society, as a particular corporation or organisation in society, and as individual managers who are moral actors within the corporation. These roles result in three levels of analysis institutional, organisational, and individual and can be expressed in terms of three principles of corporate social responsibility legitimacy, public responsibility, and managerial discretion. However, (Klonoski, R. J. 1991) sets out to address a fundamental question: "Does business and the corporation have a social nature, or not?" The answer given by any stakeholder can be associated with a theory of corporate social responsibility, and these theories fall into three categories; amoral, personal, and social.

**The Amoral View**

According to (Klonoski, R. J. 1991) this category represents a traditional view of business and the role of the corporation, that is, the corporation is seen as "highly individualised rights bearing economic entity designed for profit making and legitimatised by the laws governing incorporated businesses". Free market defenders and legal recognition theorists are among those holding this view including some who believe there is no such thing as corporate social responsibility. The "amoral" view should be carefully defined and not confused with an "immoral" view. Amoral refers to an activity without a moral quality, that is, something that is neither moral nor immoral: moral standards, restraints, or principles do not exist. This is quite different from immoral, which denotes activities that are not moral and do not conform to usually accepted or established patterns of conduct. Amoral means lacking in morals, good or bad, while immoral connotes evil or licentious behaviour. Although in some contexts being amoral is considered as reprehensible as being immoral, that is not the position taken by most advocates of the theories listed in this category. (Aaron, K. K. 2012; Eweje, G. 2007; Idemudia, U. 2009; & Ite, U. E. 2007)

**The Personal View**

Proponents of this view argue that corporations are responsible for their actions in a way comparable to the actions taken by natural persons or individuals. Therefore, the corporation can be morally blamed in a way identical or very similar to natural persons. In a *Harvard Business Review* article, (Goodpaster, K. E., & Matthews, J. B. 1982) pose the question "Can a corporation have a conscience?" and the conclusion was that conscience can reside in the organisation. Other writers support the view that corporations should be considered as persons and be held morally responsible; (French, P. A. 1979; Donaldson, T. 1986; Hoffman, W. M., & Robert, E. F. 1986; & DeGeorge, R. 1990). However, in the literature a strong counter-argument, which claims that corporations are not persons (Gibson, R. F. 1986; Danley, J. R. 1990; & Velasquez, M. 1990). They argue that it is not possible to impose moral sanctions or punishments on corporations as corporations. They contend that it is possible to blame or punish the people who work for or manage the corporation but not the corporation itself. Thus, some punishments, such as fines, are in effect paid by shareholders or passed on as costs to consumers (Frynas, J. G. 2001; Akpan, W. 2006; Aaron, K. K., & Patrick, J. M. 2013; & DesJardins, J. R. 2006).

**The "Social" View**

This view holds that the activities of corporations occur within an interpersonal and, most likely, social context. Social responsibility means being accountable for the social effects the company has on people - even indirectly (Sharma, A., & Gupta, N. 2003; Nasrullah, N. M., & Rahim, M. M. 2014; Szczuka, M. 2015). The corporation is considered a social institution in society, with social responsibilities. According to (Klonoski, R. J. 1991), the social nature of business can rest in many different theories. Thus, the extent of corporate social responsibility depends on the theoretical foundation used to support the view which, include the following:

- Social Contract - An implicit social agreement exists between business and society that determines the social nature of the corporation, identifies its duties and rights, and is considered to be an evolving document.
- Ideological/Historical - Society evolves and history gives rise to new social needs, societal demands, and changes in social values to which business is expected to contribute.
- Stakeholder - There is a social responsibility function of the interrelationships developed by the corporation with groups that have a stake. This approach was also referred to as "constituency theory." This theory is one of the main underpinnings of this paper
- Legal Creator - The corporation is a creature of law, existing only in contemplation of law, and is thus made by society for the common good of society.
- Social Permission - Society can legitimately demand that the corporation do certain kinds of activities and if the corporation is harming the public good, can restrict or eliminate its activities.
- Corporate Citizenship - With the charter, corporation becomes a legal entity with standing as a citizen similar to that of the individual and has duties as well as rights and privileges.
- Social Impact - Business has the power to change society and must consider social responsibilities.
- Social Interpenetration - Business is so intertwined with society that it cannot avoid social responsibilities.
- Moral Gratitude/Reciprocity - As business operates within a social system, it should be socially responsible out of "gratitude" or have a moral responsibility to "reciprocate." Corporations benefit from and thus owe society.

- Utilitarian – It is to the benefit of society or for the greatest good for the greatest number of people that corporations are socially responsible; social responsibility is in the business's best interest.
- Virtue-Based – This view focuses on the development of good or morally virtuous people instead of principles or contracts. A morally responsible business is one in which good people make decisions based on generally developed moral character, self discipline, moderation, hard work, courage, creativity, good humour, and intelligence. (Klonoski, R. J. 1991).

In line with the above theoretical foundations, the need for corporations and governments to adhere to the principles of corporate social responsibility has been underlined by three important international institutions; the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD. 2000) and the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes (DJSGI. 1999). We briefly here review their policies and guidelines, which represent a global consensus on the imperative of corporate social responsibility.

(Watts, P., & Holme, L. 1999; Watts, P. 2000b) identified the following "core values", which are integral to corporate social responsibility; Human Rights, Employee Rights, Environmental Protection, Community Development Supplier Relations, Monitoring and Stakeholder Rights. Our interest is in human rights, employee rights, environmental protection, community development, and stakeholder rights. These are the core values that define the responsibilities of corporations (and governments) to the society: corporate social responsibility. Thus, what benefit or harm would a company's project bring or does to the human rights of the society, the employee rights of its workers, the environmental protection of the community, the development of the community, and the rights of the community as legitimate stakeholders? In its broadest terms, therefore, the concept of corporate social responsibility is inextricably linked to the notion of environmental justice. How do governments and companies resolve the "distributional inequities in the exposure to environmental risks?" (van der Wal, H. & Klass J. M. 1999; Hill, B. E. 1999). In their study, they found economic instruments to be "socially regressive" and counterproductive to the concept of corporate social responsibility as "the percentage burden is greater for low income households than for higher income households." They argued that “Market-based instruments reduce the powerful and symbolic appeal of pollution control. As a consequence, they may lead to a weakening in the publics’ obligation to a shared environmental ethic” (van der Wal, H. & Klass J. M. 1999).

The (OECD. 2000) has also been engaged in developing the concept of corporate responsibility. (OECD. 2000), approved a set of Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. In the Guidelines, a set of "voluntary principles and standards for responsible business conduct consistent with applicable laws," the (OECD. 2000) stressed the need for both governments and companies to demonstrate their corporate responsibility by pursuing sound environmental and socially based policies. The Guidelines are "to ensure that the operations of these enterprises are in harmony with government policies, to strengthen the basis of mutual confidence between enterprises and the societies in which they operate,...and to enhance the contribution to sustainable development made by multinational enterprises." They challenge multinational enterprises "to implement best practice policies for sustainable development that seek to ensure coherence between social, economic and environmental objectives” (OECD. 2000).

The General Policies of the Guidelines advise enterprises to:

- Contribute to economic, social and environmental progress with a view to achieving sustainable development.
- Respect the human rights of those affected by their activities consistent with the host government's international obligations and commitments.
- Encourage local capacity building through close co-operation with the local community, including business interests, as well as developing the enterprise's activities in domestic and foreign markets, consistent with the need for sound commercial practice.
- Encourage human capital formation, in particular by creating employment opportunities and facilitating training opportunities for employees.
- Refrain from seeking or accepting exemptions not contemplated in the statutory or regulatory framework related to environmental, health, safety, labour, taxation, financial incentives, or other issues.
- Support and uphold good corporate governance principles and develop and apply good corporate governance practices.
- Develop and apply effective self-regulatory practices and management systems that foster a relationship of confidence and mutual trust between enterprises and the societies in which they operate.
- Promote employee awareness of, and compliance with, company policies through appropriate dissemination of these policies, including through training programmes.
- Refrain from discriminatory or disciplinary action against employees who make bona fide reports to management or, as appropriate, to the competent public authorities, on practices that contravene

the law, the Guidelines or the enterprise's policies.

- Encourage, where practicable, business partners, including suppliers and sub-contractors, to apply principles of corporate conduct compatible with the Guidelines.
- Abstain from any improper involvement in local political activities.

The (DJSI. 1999) also identified “social well-being” (corporate social responsibility) as one of its sustainability principles, which companies must satisfy in order to be listed in the (DJSI. 1999). The Dow Jones Sustainability Group Indexes (DJSGI. 1999) was launched in Zurich, Switzerland on September 08, 1999, as the first "global equity indexes that track the performance of the leading sustainability-driven companies world-wide." The (DJSGI. 2000) includes over "200 of the top sustainability companies in 68 industries in 22 countries. The total market capitalisation of the (DJSGI. 1999) is 4.3 trillion USD” (DJSGI. 1999).

**The (DJSGI. 1999) Principles are as follows;**

| Sustainability Principles | Components |
|---|---|
| Technology | The creation, production and delivery of products and services...based on innovative technology and organisation that use financial, natural and social resources in an efficient, effective and economic manner over the long-term |
| Governance | Corporate sustainability...based on the highest standards of corporate governance including management responsibility, organisational capacity, corporate culture and stakeholder relations |
| Shareholders | Shareholders' demands should be met by sound financial returns, long-term economic growth, long-term productivity increases, sharpened global competitiveness and contributions to intellectual capital |
| Industry | Sustainability companies should lead their industry's shift towards sustainability by demonstrating their commitment and publicizing their superior performance |
| Society | Sustainability companies should encourage lasting social well being by their appropriate and timely responses to rapid social change, evolving demographics, migratory flows. Shifting cultural patterns and the need for life-long learning and continuing education |

***Source:*** (DJSGI. 1999)

Thus, the concept of corporate social responsibility has been placed on the global agenda by leading international organisations. It should be seen as a critical challenge to environmental justice as it compels governments and industries to address the distributional inequities of environmental risks, especially in the natural resource sector of the economy. According to (Drucker, P. F., 1997) the concept of social responsibility is the demand/need that businesses should take responsibility for social problems/growth, social issues, social and political goals and thereby become the Keeper of society’s conscience and solver of her problems. In other words, successful businesses should act as big brothers to society at large and specifically within the particular environment where they operate (Drucker, P. F., 1997). The Niger Delta situation is attributable to non-sustainability of the environment due to damage from oil multinationals operations (Ogula, D. 2012). As, such, it has been argued that oil multinationals in the Niger Delta, need to understand that CSR is about ensuring that existing sources of survival are not ruined due to their operations, rather than merely providing some token social facilities (Ukpongson, M., & Onu, D. 2004; Evuleocha, S. U. 2005). For as it has been asserted no amount of money can compensate for the future loss of sources of livelihood (Idemudia, U., & Ite, U. E. 2006a, Idemudia, U., & Ite, U. E. 2006b). It would seem however, that MNCs in the Niger Delta are unable to appreciate peculiarities of the oil-host communities’ but rather on actions aimed at the goal of profit maximisation (Evuleocha, S. U. 2005; Amaeshi, K. M. *et al.,* 2006; & Oni, S. I., & Oyewo, M. A. 2011).

**Oil Companies Operations and the Environment in Nigeria**

The concept of social responsibility is a guide to businesses and corporations about the need to accept their respective environment of operation as a closely related part of their enterprises. This is more so in a situation where the nature of business taking place impacts negatively on the lives, property and general habitat of the host communities. However, as (Awobajo, S. A. 1981) asserted, there is evident widespread default by companies operating in the Third World most especially in Africa. Having already encountered the concepts of corporate social responsibility, the task of this section is first, to review the policies of oil multinational companies vis-a-vis those concepts and to assess the impact of those policies on the people and environment of the Niger Delta, using Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). The choice of SPDC is informed by the vastness of its operations in the Niger Delta. Shell[1] began its exploration for oil in Nigeria in 1937, but was granted a licence on November 4, 1939. It discovered Nigeria's first commercial oil field in 1956, at Oloibiri, Bayelsa State. From a modest production level of 6,000 barrels of crude oil per day (bpd) in 1958 to its current level of more than 1 million bpd, Shell is responsible for almost 50% of Nigeria's production. The company employs over 10,000 staff, including about 4,000 permanent staff. The Niger Delta is the main operating centre of

Shell, where the company manages an oil mining lease area of "about 31,000 $km^2$; 6,000 kilometres of pipelines and flow lines, 87 flow stations, eight gas plants and more than 1,000 producing wells" [2].

Fundamentally, however, the choice of Shell is informed by the fact that it is the only oil company engaged in Nigeria that is a member of the WBCSD. Furthermore, the company's former Chief Executive in Nigeria (1991-1994) and also a former Managing Director of Royal Dutch/Shell Group, Mr. Phil Watts, is an executive member of the WBCSD and co-chair of the Working Group that produced the Corporate Social Responsibility Report for the WBCSD (Watts, P. 2000b). It is against this background that the activities of SPDC are situated within corporate social responsibility in the Niger Delta. Though Shell controls only 30% of the shares of SPDC, the company's corporate membership in the WBCSD determine SPDC's strategies on corporate social responsibility.

Nigeria's extant laws and guidelines, which are supervised by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) and the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) give as condition, the execution of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for new projects and Environmental Evaluation Reports (EER) for ongoing operations. However, while the regulations and standards of DPR and FEPA may compare favourably with those of advanced western countries, like Canada and the United States, the gap is obviously in the enforcement and controls of those regulations and standards. EIA studies are not carried out and when they do, they are usually mere "veneers", rushed by academic contractors who are largely unfamiliar with Niger Delta flora and fauna (Emuedo, C. O. *et al*, 2007). This is because the oil companies, act with impunity and carry out their operations in a manner that would be considered illegal in other parts of the world. This act of impunity is even more glaring in the case of Shell. For example, "for Shell's pipeline from Stanlow in Cheshire to Mossmoran in Scottland, 17 different environmental surveys were commissioned before a single turf was cut... A detailed Environmental Assessment Impact covered every measure of the (pipeline) route.. Elaborate measures were taken to avoid lasting disfiguring and the route was diverted in several palaces to accommodate environmental concerns. On the contrary, the Niger Delta, people have never seen, let alone been consulted over, an environmental impact assessment (Rowell, A. 1994).

This therefore, explains the appalling state of Shell's pipelines, which criss-cross the Niger Delta landscape, including lands once used for agricultural purposes rendering them economically useless, in the face of Nigeria's environmental regulations and standards. More than 80% of these pipes are either lying mostly on the surface or barely below ground level as a result of which, they are easily affected by acid rain – the result of gas flaring. Thus, the busting of pipes lines is frequent, confirming that the entire pipeline network needs total overhauling. An estimated 56m gallons of oil has been spilled onto farmlands and into community water supplies (Banfield, J. (1998), while (Dublin-Green, W. F. *et al.*, 1998) opines that between 1976 and 1998, a total of 5,334 cases of oil spills were recorded, which released a cumulative total of about 2.8 million barrels of oil into the land, swamps, estuaries and coastal waters. A Shell report stated that from 1982 to 1992, 1,626,000 gallons were spilled from the company's Nigerian operations in 27 separate incidents. Of the total number of spills recorded for Shell, 40% were in Nigeria, which Shell says are caused by sabotage whereas most spills occur in the Niger Delta because of malfunction or corrosion of equipment. According to the Nigerian Ministry of Petroleum Resources, there were 2,676-recorded spills between 1976 and 1990, as follows; 38% equipment malfunction, sabotage18% and corrosion of equipment 21%, and to accidents 23%. A report showed that 14 million litres of crude oil was spilled into the environment in three years (Jeremiah, K. 2021). Also, AITEOs OML 29 Santa Barbara South Well 01 spilled over 2 million barrels of crude oil into the ecosystem before it was stopped on December, 8 2021, 32 days after it started (Akpan, W. 2006; Onoyume, J. 2006). However, it has been asserted that these official figures are grossly inaccurate as many spills often, go unreported (Hunt, T. 2000; Iyayi, 2004).

Indeed, Shell's annual rate of oil spills and the extent of its corrosive pipelines continue to define its activities in the Niger Delta. Shell's data indicated that there were 815 oil spills between 1997 and 1999, out of which its corrosive pipelines caused 170, an alarming 20.85%. This data is exclusive of the massive volume spilled at Ekakpamre, Delta State, in 1999 (Shell. 1998; Shell. 1999). As (Natufe, O. I. 2001) opined, Shell blamed that oil spill on "sabotage", just as it has always done in cases of massive oil spills caused by its corrosive pipelines (Natufe, O. I. 2001). A renowned authority on the political economy of oil corporations, Terisa Turner, in an independent assessment exposed the falsity of Shell's "sabotage" thesis of Shell's oil spill at Ogbodo, Rivers State. Turner declared: " The claim of sabotage is patently false...The oil companies have been claiming that the oil spills, the pipeline explosions were all caused by sabotage. But there is no evidence to this so far. These are just lies, distractions, shirking of responsibility on the part of the oil companies - and Shell here is the most serious culprit" (Turner, T. 2001). In the Niger Delta, Shell is responsible for more than 60% of the gas flaring (Hunt, T. 2000). Shell admits to burning off two billion standard cubic feet of gas a day in the Niger Delta. Britain's World Wide Fund for Nature says gas flares in Nigeria emit more than 34 million tons of carbon dioxide annually (Shelby, B. 1996) and 12 million tons of methane a year, making it the world's largest single contributor to global warming

(Hunt, 2000). According to Terisa Turner, "it is criminally negligent of Shell, Texaco, Agip, Elf, and the other oil companies...hand in hand with NNPC, to be flaring natural gas and on this massive scale" (Turner, T. 2001).

In addition, it has been estimated that in its operation in the Niger Delta, Shell has cut nearly 40,000 miles of seismic lines through the fragile Niger Delta ecosystems, 24,000 miles of which are through delicate mangrove swamps (Douglas, O., & Okonta, I. 2001). (Emuedo, A. O., & Anoliefo, G. O. 2008) reported that crude oil pollution affects the development of plant roots in the mangrove plant leading to eventual death. It takes about 35 year for mangrove plant destroyed to regenerate completely. Therefore, the effect of oil exploration and exploitation activities on the mangrove ecosystem; the hub on which the lives of the Niger Delta rural population revolves can best be imagined. With regards to the health of the people, a consortium of experts in their study of oil spillage in the Niger Delta reported the proliferate manifestation of several phobic disorders (fears) such as Agoraphobic Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Stress Disorder, Somato Form Stress Disorder, Hypochrondriasis and Affective Stress Disorder on the people of the Niger Delta, due to their continuous contact with the contaminated environment (Akpofure, E. A. *et al.*, 2000). (Achebe, C. 2001) also reported the dramatic increased in the incidence of skin diseases, a result of the people bathing and drinking in polluted water. Furthermore, malnutrition with the evidence of Kwashiorkor has returned to the Niger Delta and according to (Ekpu, A. O. 1995) crop failure and diminishing fish populations as a result of environmental pollution is responsible. In addition, toxins such as phenol cyanide and sulphide-suspended solids are found in large concentrations in river in the Niger Delta as frequent oil pollution particularly through spills has led to bioconcentration of this toxin. The effects of cyanide on the thyroid gland, the neurological system, and respiratory system are well documented (ATSDA 2003).

Despite the massive environmental degradation, coupled with the abject poverty, the oil companies have done little to alleviate the sufferings of the Niger Delta people either by bettering their environment or their means of livelihood. The attendant discontent especially in Ijaw land led to the Kaiama Declaration of December 31, 1998, calling for an end to the continuous deprivation of the people of region. The incessant conflicts, which have engulfed the whole region, often with implication for the international community, are clear manifestation of the seriousness with which the Nigerian State through the government has tackled the twin issues of environmental degradation and poverty in the Niger Delta. Thus, the Niger Delta has become a metaphor for underdevelopment in Nigeria, for beside the massive exploitation of the area, the oil companies and the government have not made any serious efforts whatsoever to pay the least attention to the very serious environmental degradation which have accompanied oil production and exploration activities in the Niger Delta. As (Turner, T. 2001) aptly opines, the involvement of the federal government in this environmentally destructive practice, through its crown corporation, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), is a testimony of its policy on the safety and security of the Niger Delta people. Thus, reactions against the deplorable situation in the region have gone beyond facilities destruction to incidences of violence against foreign oil workers. This what some writers have labelled "Columbianisation of the Niger Delta" (Drohan, M. 2000; Fleshman, M. D. 1999).

## CONCLUSION

It is quite obvious to any observer except the multinational oil companies and the Nigerian state that the people of the Niger Delta residing in the areas of oil exploration bear a significantly higher exposure to serious environmental risks. The Niger Delta ecosystems have been rendered desolate as a result of environmental degradation caused by oil exploration. In consequence, the entire region has become an environmental disaster, a "dead land", to borrow a phrase from Terisa Turner, due to the activities of oil companies, led by Shell. According to Professor D. Denga as quoted by (Ake, C. 1981), in countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait etc all the citizens enjoy the gains of oil because oil is mined all over the country, the whole society is therefore, the host community. In Australia and even New Zealand, necessary policies have been put in place by the government to help a deprived group like the Aborigines. The Niger Delta crisis had become retrogressive and counter-productive since left unattended to (Ake, C. 1981). Alex Ekwueme also blamed the delinquency of the oil companies directly on the Nigerian federal government for its inability to arrive at genuine (practical) policies for the Niger delta region (Nwokoh, C. 2000). He went further to state that oil money was not being used in developing the oil producing areas and that if the government were giving some little attention to the oil regions, the whole of the Niger Delta Area would have changed for good already (Ake, C. 1981).

Thus, the oil companies with the connivance of the Nigerian state equally deprive the host communities in the Niger-Delta by the deliberate abuse of their habitat. In February 2003 a panel of jurists set up by the House of Representatives, to investigate the complaints of the Ijaws against Shell noted that oil companies operating in these areas including Shell were only interested in their business to the detriment of the host communities. The panel therefore recommended that Shell should pay the Ijaws the sum of \$1.5 billion as compensation for the persistent damage to their environment over the years (Emuakpor, C. O., 1998), which Shell refused to pay. Contrast this with the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska U.S.A., on March 24, 1989. About 11 million gallons of crude oil were spilled by the Exxon Valdez, and it is estimated that Exxon has paid "anything from US$4 billion to over US$9 billion"[3] in clean up and liability fees. If we accept the premise that, the fundamental function of a state is to provide for the safety and security of its citizens, one is then baffled as to the whereabouts of the Nigerian state on this issue as all other functions - economic prosperity, etc. - derive from this fundamental function. Thus, any activity of government that fails the test of enhancing the safety and security of its citizens is inimical to the principles of good governance. Oil exploration and exploitation have not only ruined the economic base (means of livelihood) of the Niger Delta people, it has grossly endangered their safety and security in such a way that, any future recovery becomes a matter of doubtful conjecture.

Driven by economic gain, the oil multinationals have neglected the *safety* and security of the Niger Delta, while milking the region to finance its economic, industrial and political programmes. By its actions, it would appear that the only concern of the Nigerian state is to ensure the continued flow of oil, which accounts for more than 90% of its revenue. Therefore, it has adopted positions injurious to the environment and the people, but supportive to the oil companies in the region. Thus, it was no surprise when thousands of poor peasants were killed in a series of oil fire disasters across the region; Idjerhe, Ekakpamre, Amukpe, Egborode, and Elume caused by the corrosive pipelines of the oil companies. These wanton deaths clearly manifest the failure of social corporate responsibility in the Niger Delta. There is thus, the urgent need for the oil multinationals in the Niger Delta to work assiduously for adoption of social and environmentally compliant corporate social responsibility concepts that will guarantee sustainability of the environment in the region.

**Notes**

- Originally known as *Shell D'Arcy*, later *Shell-BP*, jointly financed by the *Royal Dutch/Shell Group of Companies* and the British Petroleum.
- SPDC, 2000 *HIGHLIGHTS*, npd, p.5. See also, SPDC: Factfile, http//www.shellnigeria.com/shell/factfile_rhs.asp
- In 2001, total revenue from onshore oil production was 233 billion naira. Of this figure, Bayelsa State's contribution was 36.22%, Delta State 29.19%, Rivers State 27.57% other state contributed the rest.

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