Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences (2012) Volume 5 No1, 154-178

Oil Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and Dislocations in Oil Fence-line Communities in the Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The paper is of the view that fence-line communities or communities living next door to an oil company location or facility attracts to themselves economic, social, health, and environmental dislocations, more especially, where such people are poor and voiceless. Communities are made to live with these dislocations because the good of the state (interest for oil rents/royalties) which coincide with the good of corporation always conflict with the good of the communities. The paper contends that such conflict of interests between fence-line communities on one hand and the oil company/state partnership on the other hand is a key conflict driver in the Niger Delta. The paper suggests that oil TNCs initiate genuine exit plans for their host communities preparatory to their exit. The Nigerian state, on her part, must initiate genuine review of obnoxious oil related legislations and strengthening of existing regulatory agencies to meet the exigencies of oil TNCs/fence-line communities' concerns.*

Key words: *Fence-line communities, dislocations, Niger Delta, etc.*

> *If the company is prepared to behave in such a socially irresponsible manner in the land of the Free, deep in Crockett country and on the home turf of litigation crazed, predatory lawyers, just what do they consider themselves free to do in states of the Third World, where lax, poorly applied laws are all too much in evidence and where corruption among officials is exercised on a truly horrific scale? What, for example, has Shell got up to in Africa's most populous nation, that giant of a land on the continent's western shore, the Republic of Nigeria?*
>
> *-Cummunis and Beasant, 2005, p.204*

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1. Introduction

Why are oil fence-line communities environmentally unhygienic for human habitation wherever they exist? In the United States of America, the people of Norco, Louisiana and Port Arthur, Texas, living next to Shell facilities consider their lives as hell on earth, nicknaming Shell "The Neighbour from Hell" in the process (see Cummunis and Beasant, 2005:199). As in Norco and Port Arthur, hosting or living next to Shell has dare consequences for such communities, be it in the developed or developing countries, "wherever people are poor and voiceless", Margie Richards of Norco, Louisiana, observed with frustration (Been, 1994; FoE, 2003; Bond, 2005).

In the Niger Delta, living next to a Shell Petroleum Development Company (hereafter SPDC) facility is not different from the unsavoury experiences of the people of Norco and Port Arthur, United States. By demographic calculations, the Niger Delta is a minority region in the socio-political configuration of Nigeria. Anywhere poor and voiceless minorities are (e.g. the Niger Delta, the Vietnam Delta, the Oriente Indians of the Ecuadorian Amazon, etc) such people and their environment are treated as people on the fringe. What is most profoundly noticed in minority areas, especially, where natural resources are mined and exploited is the massive environmental degradation encountered by the aborigines of such areas ably caused by rent seeking states with lax environmental laws and weak institutions.

Long (1962:119) had warned that "territorial loyalty and corporate loyalty can conflict. The good of the local community and the good of the corporation do not necessarily coincide". If Long's (1962) assertion is anything to go by, a huge gap exists between the interests of oil host communities and those of the TNCs and the Nigerian State. Whereas, the environment is the core priority of communities, oil rent/royalty is the interest of the Nigerian state and the oil TNCs. It is the prevalence of such conflict of

interests between oil TNCs/state and fence-line communities that has left the Niger Delta in its present state, a region that ought to be declared a High Consequence Area1.

In the absence of such declaration and treatment, oil fence-line communities in the Niger Delta bear the suffocating brunt of hosting oil TNCs, where a plethora of dislocations are commonplace and that had remained the primary cause of the restiveness in the Niger Delta. The remainder of this article is organized as follows. Section 2 attempts to situate a link between slums and oil fence-line communities in the Niger Delta. Section 3 explores the plethora of dislocations noticed in fence-line communities for hosting or living next to oil TNCs. Sections 4 and 5 are conclusions and references respectively.

2. Oil Fence-line Communities and Slums: Establishing the link

In the Niger Delta, two accounts possibly explain the origin of fence-line communities. In one account, oil TNCs cites their facilities some metres away from an existing community, with the possibility of the community naturally expanding towards the company premises. There is a legal recognition to such communities as their presence predates the oil facility. In the second account, the emergence of fence-line communities is traceable to an illegal or a semi-legal status, wherein the concerned suburb/area spring up to benefit from the supposedly "lures" of an already existing oil facility in the locality. For example, arising from the absence of legal claims to residential areas, make-shift shanty structures dominate the housing pattern of illegal/semi-legal residential areas.

Fence-line communities in the Niger Delta, with or without legal recognition to their settlements share identical characteristics-the prevalence of poverty, want, the paucity of infrastructure, basic needs such as water, polluted air and environment. These characteristics are identical to slums anywhere they exist. One, therefore, naturally tend to see oil

fence-line communities in the Niger Delta as slums/squatter settlements. Establishing a link between slums and oil fence-line communities in the Niger Delta is an easy one.

An operational definition of slums as provided by a United Nations Expert Group Meeting, held in Nairobi from 28 to 30 October, 2002, defines "slum as an area that combines, to various extents, the following characteristics (restricted to the physical and legal characteristics of the settlement, and excluding the more difficult social dimensions):

a) Inadequate access to safe water,

b) Inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure,

c) Poor structural quality of housing,

d) Overcrowding, and,

e) Insecure residential status."

The UN-Habitat (2003) report, under the title "The Challenge of Slums" on its part further collaborated the above definition wherein it identified indicators and thresholds for defining slums, as it is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Indicators and Thresholds for Defining Slums

Characteristics	*Indicator*	*Definition*
Access to water	Inadequate drinking water supply *(adjusted MDG Indicator 30)*	A settlement has an inadequate drinking water supply if less than 50% of households have an improved water supply: *(adjusted MDG Indicator 30)*: household connection; access to public stand pipe; rain water collection; with at least 20 litres/person/day available *within an acceptable collection distance*
Access to sanitation	*Inadequate sanitation (MDG indicator 31)*	A settlement has inadequate sanitation if less than 50% of households have improved sanitation: public sewer; septic tank; pour-flush latrine; ventilated improved pit latrine. The excreta disposal system is considered adequate if it is private or shared by a *maximum of two households.*
Structural quality of housing	a. *Location*	Proportion of households residing on or near a hazardous site. The following locations should be considered: housing in geologically hazardous zones (landslide/earthquake and flood areas); housing on or under garbage mountains; housing around high-industrial pollution areas; housing around other unprotected high-risk zones (e.g. railroads, airports, energy transmission lines).
	b. *Permanency of structure*	Proportion of households living in temporary and/or dilapidated structures. The following factors should be considered when placing a housing unit in these categories: quality of construction (e.g. materials used for wall, floor and roof); compliance with local building codes, standards and bylaws.
Overcrowding	*Overcrowding*	Proportion of households with more than two persons per room. The alternative is to set a minimum standard for floor area per person (e.g. 5 square metres).
Security of tenure	*Security of tenure (MDG indicator 32)*	Proportion of households with formal title deeds to both land and residence, Proportion of households with formal title deeds to either one of land or residence, Proportion of households with enforceable agreements or any document as a proof of a tenure arrangement.

Source: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 2003, p.12

A critical look at the definition and table above reveals that oil fence-line communities' share the characteristics identified above and therefore justifies the claim that oil fence-line communities are indeed slums.

It is indeed an irony of fate that supposedly blessed fence-line communities be associated and considered slums. This development is a sharp violation of a number of international conventions of which Nigeria is a signatory. For example, the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (1976) observed that *"the condition of human settlements largely determines the quality of life, the improvement of which is a prerequisite for the full satisfaction of basic needs, such as employment, housing, health services, education and*

recreation". In the section on "General Principles", the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (1976) stated:

Principle 1

The improvement of the quality of life of human beings is the first and most important objective of every human settlement policy. These policies must facilitate the rapid and continuous improvement in the quality of life of all people, beginning with the satisfaction of the basic needs of food, shelter, clean water, employment, health, education, training, social security without any discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, ideology, national or social origin or other cause, in a frame of freedom, dignity and social justice,

Principle 6

The right of free movement and the right of each individual to choose the place of settlement within the domain of his own country should be recognized and safeguarded,

Principle 11

The nations must avoid the pollution of the biosphere and the oceans and should join in the effort to end irrational exploitation of all environmental resources, whether non-renewable or renewable in the long term. The environment is the common heritage of mankind and its protection is the responsibility of the whole international community. All acts by nations and people should therefore be inspired by a deep respect for the protection of the environmental resources upon which life itself depends, and,

Principle 15

The highest priority should be placed on the rehabilitation of expelled and homeless people who have been displaced by natural or man-made catastrophes.

These principles are not only unimplemented but wantonly violated by both oil TNCs and successive Nigerian governments over the years. Principle 1 above requires that basic needs of communities be provided in consultation with the people. However, this principle is not adhered to. It is in this light that Okafor (1985: 115,117) posited that,

…the basic needs should be identified for each community in recognition of the fact that the priority of needs differs according to the people's socio-cultural conditions. It is observed that if the priority of needs is not sorted out with the people, the government may be involved in spending money on rural development projects that least satisfies the people's needs. …the starting point of improving the lot of the rural population is to provide them with the basic needs with the ultimate objective of creating among them a wholesome and improved living standard. Among the requirements for an improved living condition are food, water, shelter, health services, education, employment, democratic participation, equity and self-defence. Others are social and physical facilities which the government provides to improve the people's well-being. Within these various types of needs it is possible to make a classification of the needs under instrumental, basic, and general-cum-social needs. Although instrumental needs seem inseparable from basic needs…as those needs which are the sources for producing or purchasing the basic input needs. For instance, while health in any community is an instrumental need, it cannot be maintained without such basic input needs such as food, water and shelter. Similarly, work and income are instrumental needs required to provide the basic needs. In fact, gainful employment of the rural population is what is needed not only to produce food but also provide shelter, improve domestic hygiene and train children. It is sometimes argued that employment in itself is a basic need, for self-respect apart from the output of income it provides. In rural Nigeria where overt unemployment is staggering in dimension the instrumental importance of employment seems overwhelming.

In a survey intended to determine the priority of community needs, Okafor (1985) discovered that infrastructural facilities such as markets, motor parks and electricity, which government, and oil TNCs give higher priority, are not the basic needs of the rural population, instead rural community needs are at variant from government prioritisation of needs. He concluded that basic needs dictate the survival of any community. Basics needs are supported by instrumental needs without which the acquisition of basic needs is impossible. The general and social needs are not however non-essentials but their procurement could be deferred till such a time when the economic climate is such that most of the first things have been provided. He was quick to add that (as shown in tables 2 and 3 below) *"in providing the above needs there is usually a conflict between the beneficiaries and the government as to who should streamline the hierarchy of needs and control the mode and pace of providing them.....any worthwhile attempt to rationalize the priority of needs in rural Nigeria must of necessity involve the people. Involvement means the process of having the citizens provide the background information as well as consulting them at every stage of the need determination process".*

Table 2: Rural Development Needs Classified according to their Importance for Wellbeing

Basic Needs	***Instrumental Needs***	***General and Social Needs***
Examples	***Examples***	***Examples***
Water	***Health***	***Access roads***
Food	***Education***	***Motor parks***
Shelter	***Employment***	***Industries***
Personal Safety	***Equality***	***Churches/mosques***
	Political participation	***Electricity***
		Community halls
		TV viewing centres

Source: Okafor (1985), p.118

Table 3: Order of Ranking Rural Development Needs in Selected Rural Areas in Nigeria

Development need	*No. of Responses*	*Rank Score*	*Order in Rank*
Water supply	*98*	*363*	*1*
Agricultural loans and other inputs	*51*	*221*	*2*
Health services	*49*	*206*	*3*
Schools	*36*	*184*	*4*
Electricity	*31*	*163*	*5*
Industries	*24*	*134*	*6*
Postal services	*18*	*106*	*7*

Source: Okafor (1985) p.121

As typically illustrated from the above tables, fence-line communities are by nature agrarian communities and so their basic needs priority simply perfectly fit into the above survey. The experiences of oil fence-line communities are worrisome. Agricultural lands and available sources of water supply such as lakes, ponds, streams, etc, are routinely polluted through oil spillage, and deliberate environmental alterations arising from pipeline and road construction to oil location sites. Health services as in clinics, schools, etc, are sparsely provided but without requisite medical personnel, trained teachers and equipment to run the schools and clinics.

Lastly, menial employment is equally provided, but far in between, for fence-line communities and even when it is provided it is gender biased in favour of men to the detriment of women/girls. In a community predicament/scenario as above, a plethora of dislocations becomes commonplace. The next section considers a number of such dislocations in the fence-line communities of the Niger Delta.

3. The Cost of Hosting/Living Next to a SPDC Facility: A Plethora of Dislocations

Poverty, pain, perseverance and age long grievances are the words/phrases ascribable to life in fence-line communities. Things had always fallen apart in oil fence-line communities, especially as moral values are consistently desecrated, family/marriage institutions are in disarray, and

genuine economic activities such as agriculture are either made comatose by the oil TNCs or abandoned in search of temporary/seasonal and migratory oil company employment (Egbe, 2011).

(i) Economic Dislocation:

The Niger Delta people are by nature fishermen and farmers. The discovery and production of oil and gas has transformed all of that today. There is today an intense search for seasonal oil company jobs or since "*petroleum creates a world of illusion because some people become wealthy without effort. This means that work ethics are undermined and negative attitudes towards certain forms of work, especially manual labor*" (Karl, 2007:14). This enthrones the ugly phenomenon of "job selling" in fence-line communities. This trend is widespread because oil TNCs allocates job quotas to their host communities. To that extent, youths who had hitherto, dropped out of school due to the economic attractions from the oil industry, seek to secure casual oil company jobs. Rather than keep the job, majority of them prefer leisure to keeping the secured job by way of "selling off" the job for a fee for a period of time. This arises because as Karl (2007:14) posits "*people that experience a sudden influx of income they did not work hard to get have not usually developed the fiscal and financial discipline or work habits normally required to get and keep such windfalls. They tend to become accustomed to relatively high salaries and little work"*. The "job selling" syndrome has come to attract yet another ugly dimension to the problem of economic dislocation in oil fence-line communities in the Niger Delta. There is a huge influx of non-indigenes (even foreigners) into oil communities as job buyers in search of youths willing and ready to sell their jobs with the oil TNCs (Karl, 2007:13).

Economic dislocation in fence-line communities also has a gender dimension. Jobs in oil locations/facilities are male dominant, usually perpetuated through oil and gas industries' encouragement of construction industries. The oil

and gas industry by its nature is construction oriented. This encourages male dominance and thus a set back for women, as industries associated with women are not given a pride of place (Ross, 2006). The implication of this trend is double fold. First, it is, not surprising when women in fence-line communities jettison fishing and farming for a more lucrative "job"-commercial sex. "*This survival strategy is one of the factors responsible for increase in sexual networking at oil locations as the nation's economy takes a downward trend"* (Faleyimu, et al, 2000). Second, that "*petroleum extraction causes men to prefer more children – a pattern found in both the Middle East (such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Algeria) and elsewhere (such as Nigeria, Venezuela, Indonesia, and Norway). Perhaps this occurs because women in oil-rich countries have fewer opportunities to contribute to household income, which leads men to prefer wives who stay at home and can raise many children"*(Ross, 2006:11).

(ii) Social Dislocation

> SPDC always tries to minimize the impact of operations on the environment but also to ensure that local communities gain real benefits from having a Shell company as a neighbour.
>
> -Richard Tookey, former Head of Public Affairs, SIPC (Greenpeace, 2002)

The environmental and social costs of living next door to Shell, contrary to Richard Tookey assertion above, are enormous for fence-line communities worldwide. To this end, campaigns had been undertaken by scholars (e.g. Terry Lynn Karl), human rights organizations (e.g. Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch), corporate institutions (e.g. Friends of the Earth (FoE); Friends of the Earth, Nigeria (FoEN); Greenpeace), and now even Christian Organisations (e.g. Christian Aid) to minimise the social cost of hosting oil TNCs. For example, in 2002, a global delegation of Shell neighbours from Asia, Africa and North America presented the following demands to Shell during her AGM meeting (see FoE, 2003:5):

a) "To stop wasting its resources on "feel good" social projects that do nothing to solve the serious health and environmental problems of its facility operations that plague communities around the world,

b) To eliminate hazardous and life-threatening facility accidents by replacing antiquated and dilapidated pipelines and relocating them to nonresidential areas,

c) To significantly reduce pollution where Shell operates in communities of color, just as Shell has done at its facilities in Denmark and other locations that are predominantly populated by Caucasians,

d) To comply with local legislation and relocate oil depots away from Manila, where the densely populated area is subjected to the depot's constant toxic emissions, as well as the threat of the depot being a terrorist target,

e) To improve and enhance its identification and measurement of facility pollution by employing state-of the- art real-time environmental monitoring, which thoroughly involves community participation,

f) To cease any and all delays in terminating the odious practice of gas flaring in Nigeria,

g) To take full responsibility for past environmental damage that continues to impact the health and environment of people in places like Sao Paulo, Brazil and Curaçao, Caribbean, and,

h) To fully and accurately assess the significant impacts of massive projects, like the Sakhalin II oil and gas drilling, processing, and export complex in Russia, which could ultimately subject Sakhalin Island to irreversible environmental disasters and devastating economic losses".

Despite these concerted efforts by fence-line communities to drive home their demands, SPDC's oil and gas operations have continued to inflict massive life-threatening pains on host communities. Gas flaring still remains one of Shell's sources of anguish to fence-line communities in the Niger Delta; the effects arising there from are still intensely disputed. For example, Argo (2002) unequivocally noted that "*a well operating flare is opposed to well-accepted principles*

of sustainable development. A poorly operating flare is a travesty against the entire biosphere within up to a 30km radius. It is axiomatic that where a flare is smoking no one should be downwind". The SPDC argues to the contrary that *"flares are usually located far from human habitation and protected by earth bunds. When communities have expanded in the direction of production facilities, SPDC has taken appropriate action, including relocation of flares. There is no evidence that flares affect crops" (Greenpeace, 2002).*

The above statement credited to SPDC is contested by a number of scholars and corporate bodies as shown below:

a) It is not true that flare sites are located away from human settlements. Ken Saro Wiwa stated that "*the most notorious action of both companies (Shell and Chevron) has been the flaring of gas, in the middle of villages, as in Dire (Bonu oil field) or very close to human habitation as in the Yorla and Korokoro oil fields in Ogoni. This action has destroyed wildlife, and plant life, poisoned the atmosphere and therefore the inhabitants in the surrounding areas and made the residents half-deaf and prone to respiratory diseases. Whenever it rains in Ogoni, all we have is acid rain which further poisons water courses, streams, creeks and agricultural land"* (Greenpeace (2002),

b) It is also not true that SPDC has relocated any flare site arising from expansion of human settlements, and,

c) There is scientific evidence that flares affect crops. Daniel-Kalio and Braide (2006) inferred that,

There is some evidence to support farmers' belief that gas flaring in the study area adversely affects their crop yields. The effects are of two kinds: direct and indirect. Gas flaring induces unfavourable environmental conditions, which lowers the potentiality of plants to yield well. Indirect effects involve the predisposition of plants to higher pest and disease attacks, the attraction of yam beetles and grasshoppers to the area which attack crops, and the enhancement of some weeds which are tolerant to gas flaring. Generally, the nearer

plantains and oil palms are to gas flares, the poorer is their plant aspect

This conclusion was arrived at from their field survey of gas flare effects on plants; wherein farmers' perception and field survey yielded similar results (see tables below).

Table 4: Farmers' Perception of the Effect of Gas Flaring on their Crops

Crop	Nature of problem attributed to gas flaring by farmers at Akri
Yam (D. rotundata)	Gas flare (GF) continuously emitting heat radiation, light and unburnt gas drastically reduces yield, both quantitatively and qualitatively. GF attracts insects, such as variegated grasshopper (*Zonocerus variegates*) that eats up vines, and yam beetle (*Heteroligus* spp.) that attacks yam tubers.
Cassava (M. esculenta)	Gas flare attracts grasshoppers, which eat up the plants
Rice (O. sativa)	No gas flare effect on rice was reported.
Mango (M. indica)	Gas flare causes premature ripening of fruits, especially during the dry season months of December-March each year.
Sweet orange (C. sinensis)	Gas flare effect is similar to that of mango. In addition farmers believe that toxic effluents dispersed by flood water to homes and farms adversely affect the crop.

Source: Daniel-Kalio and Braide (2006) p.6

Table 5: Field Verification of Effects of Gas Flaring in the Study Area during the Wet and Dry Seasons

Likely effect due GF	Nature of problem and crops affected
Increased sooty mould (*Meliola mangiferae*) incidence	The *Meliola* sp. is a saprophytic fungus that forms sooty mould on both surfaces of plant leaves. It occurs heavily on mango, sweet orange, lime (*Citrus aurantifolia*), bitter leaf (*Vernonia amygdalina*) and pepper (*Capsicum frutescens*). High incidence can reduce photosynthesis.
Severe yellowing and death of plants	The causative agents appear complex: plantain, pepper and, particularly, sweet orange are very susceptible.
Increased pest incidence (*Heteroligu* sspp. and *Z. varietgates*)	At our demand, we were shown a handful of yam beetles (*Heteroligus* sp.) and some variegatus grasshopper. They also showed us harvested yam tubers full of pot-holes from beetle attack.
Enhanced weed competition from e.g. signal grass (*Bracharia deflexa*) and dayflower (*Commelina benghalensis*)	Graminaceous plants like rice, bamboo and signal grass seem to thrive well in the area.

Source: Daniel-Kalio and Braide, 2006 p.7

Social Dislocation: The Health Dimension

(a) Effects Arising the Naked Flares

Research shows that oil facilities next to fence-line communities have diverse adverse health effects on

communities. The constant gas flares adjacent to fence-line communities is, indeed, worrisome. It is a scenario of no night forever, as gas flares produce constant brightness day in day out. The health implications of this are in sundry shapes and form. For example, May (2004) posited that gas flares produce chemicals whose effects are discernible (see table below).

Table 6: Flare Chemicals Have Known Health Impacts

Hydrocarbon Gases	**Can cause smog, and some hydrocarbons are very toxic (such as leukemia-causing benzene). Ground-level ozone (smog) makes breathing difficult for sensitive individuals and normal adults.**
Particulate Matter (Solid Particle)	**Particulates can cause breathing problems and increase death rates. If a flare is smoking, particulates have formed.**
PAHs (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons)	**May cause cancer, reproductive harm, and have adverse impacts on ability to fight disease. PAHs include compounds like anthracene and benzo(a)pyrene.**
Sox (Sulfur Oxides)	**Can cause bad odors, breathing and eye irritation, induce asthma attacks, and at higher levels, is acutely hazardous.**
CO2 (Carbon Dioxide)	**Can cause global climate change, including extreme weather, higher energy hurricanes, droughts, floods, wildfires, and rising sea levels.**
CO (Carbon Monoxide)	**Can cause heart problems - For persons with heart disease, low level exposure may cause chest pain and reduce ability to exercise.**
NOx (Nitrogen Oxides)	**Can cause smog and breathing irritation. NOx also reacts to cause toxic particulate formation and NOx in the air can substantially contribute to nitrogen pollution in water.**

Source: May, 2004 p.4

Medical data obtained (see tables 7 and 8) from Igwuruta and Ayama (Rivers State, Nigeria) health centres respectively, showed that *"there is indeed a correlation between environmental variables resulting from gas flaring and the development of certain ailments found in individuals residing in such areas"* (**Gobo, et al, 2009)**.

Table 7: Disease Distribution of Igwuruta (2004-2007)

Type	Freq.	%	Types	Freq.	%
Fever	243	29.1	Skin disease/itching	18	2.2
Cough	143	17.1	Malaria	16	1.9
Loss of appetite	66	7.9	Bleeding	15	1.8
Stooling/dysentery	56	6.7	Body pain	12	1.4
Catarrh/cold	53	6.3	Weight loss	4	0.5
Vomiting	50	6	Chest pain	3	0.4
Body weakness	35	4.2	Dizziness	8	1
Boil	27	3.2	Pneumonia	2	0.2
Breathing difficulties	21	2.5	Measles	3	-
Headache	19	2.3	Constipation	8	1
Abdominal pain	19	2.3	Eye irritation	11	1.3
			Asthma	4	0.5

Source: Gobo, et al, 2009 p.32

Table 8: Disease Distribution of Ayama (2004-2007)

Type	Freq.	%	Type	Freq.	%
Fever	170	20.1	Skin disease/itching	3	0.4
Cough	40	4.7	Muscle pain	10	1.2
Loss of appetite	50	5.9	Pneumonia	2	0.2
Bleeding	5	0.6	Catarrh/cold	150	17.8
Weight loss	6	0.7	Vomiting	30	3.6
Chest pain	2	0.2	Dizziness	2	0.2
Body weakness	32	3.8	Stooling/dysentery	170	20.1
Boil	30	3.6	Measles	4	0.5
Breathing difficulties	5	0.6	Constipation	15	1.8
Headache	90	10.7	Eye irritation	4	0.5
Abdominal pain	24	2.8	Asthma	1	0.1

Source: Gobo, et al (2009) p.32

(b) Community Noise

WHO (1995) defines and situates Community Noise *"as noise emitted from all sources except noise at the industrial workplace. Main sources of community noise include road, rail and air traffic, industries, construction and public work, and the neighbourhood (p. iii)...noise has always been an important environmental problem for man. In ancient Rome, rules existed as to the noise emitted from the ironed wheels of wagons which battered the stones on the pavement, causing disruption of sleep and annoyance to the Romans (p. v)"..."a change in the morphology and physiology of an organism that results in impairment of functional capacity, or an impairment*

of capacity to compensate for additional stress, or increases the susceptibility of an organism to the harmful effects of other environmental influences. This definition includes any temporary or long-term lowering of the physical, psychological or social functioning of humans or human organs (p.39)…may cause primary effects during sleep and secondary effects that can be assessed the day after night-time noise exposure. Uninterrupted sleep is a prerequisite for good physiological and mental functioning, and the primary effects of sleep disturbance are: difficulty in falling asleep; awakenings and alterations of sleep stages or depth; increased blood pressure, heart rate and finger pulse amplitude; vasoconstriction; changes in respiration; cardiac arrhythmia; and increased body movements" (p. ix).

WHO noise analysis of community noise from gas flare sites portrays community noise as a major source of complaint and precipitator for anger and indeed in oil fence-line communities in the Niger Delta. Gas flares are usually associated with an irritating noise from the flare sites. It is a violation of WHO's first principle which stated that health is *"a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"*. In spite of the known effects of gas flares, noise regulations are either never formulated at all, rarely exist or where they exists it is not enforced. In order to bridge the gap of the non-existence of regulations for community noise by governments and oil industries, WHO (1995) published her guidelines for community noise (see table below).

Table 9: Guideline Values for Community Noise in specific Environments

Specific Environment	Critical health effect (s)	LAeq [dB(A)]	Time base (hours)	LAmax fast [dB]
Outdoor living area	Serious annoyance, daytime and evening Moderate annoyance, daytime and evening	55 50	16 16	- -
Dwelling, indoors	Speech intelligibility & moderate annoyance, day time & evening	35	16	
Inside bedrooms	Sleep disturbance, night-time	30	8	45
Outside bedrooms	Sleep disturbance, window open (outdoor values)	45	8	60
School class rooms & pre-schools, indoors	Speech intelligibility, disturbance of info extraction, message communication	35	during class	-
Pre-school bedrooms, indoor	Sleep disturbance	30	sleeping time	45
School, playground outdoor	Annoyance (external source)	55	during play	-
Hospital, ward rooms, indoors	Sleep disturbance, night-time Sleep disturbance, daytime and evenings	30 30	8 16	40 -
Hospitals, treatment rooms, indoors	Interference with rest and recovery	#1		
Industrial, commercial shopping and traffic areas, indoors and outdoors	Hearing impairment	70	24	110
Ceremonies, festivals and entertainment events	Hearing impairment (patrons:<5 times/year)	100	4	110
Public addresses, indoors &outdoors	Hearing impairment	85	1	110
Music and other sounds thro headphones/ earphones	Hearing impairment (free-field value)	85 #4	1	110
Impulse sounds from toys, fireworks and firearms	Hearing impairment (adults) Hearing impairment (children)	- -	- -	140 #2 120 #2
Outdoors in parkland and conservations areas	Disruption of tranquility	#3		

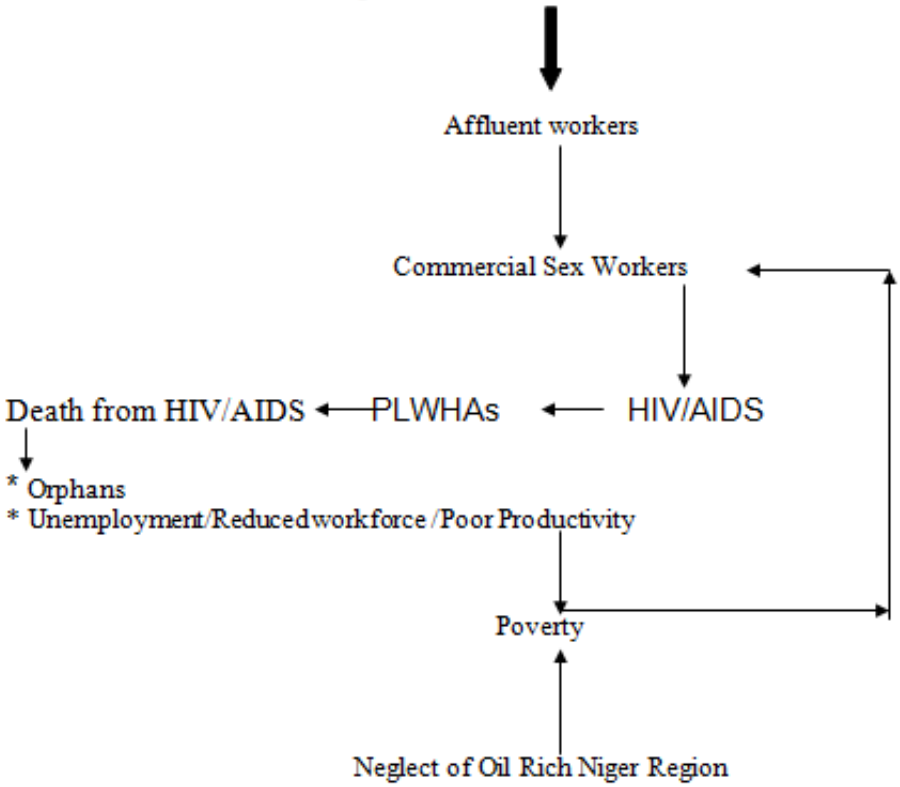
Source: WHO 1995, p. xv, #1: As low as possible

(c) Erosion in Human Health and Family Institutions

An unprecedented prevalence of HIV/AIDS is ravaging oil fence-line communities in the Niger Delta (Faleyimu, et al, 2000). Udonwa, et al (2004:3) posited that a 2001 Nigerian Government HIV sero-prevalence data irrefutably discovered "*the Niger Delta region was more infected and affected by HIV than any other region or zone in the country. Five out of the nine Niger Delta states (Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers) fall among the ten*

Nigerian States with the highest sero-prevalence rate. Seven of the nine states are among the first eighteen (18) states in Nigeria with unhealthy high sero-prevalence rates, that is, a rate above 5%. Six of these seven are the six states that constitute two-thirds of the Niger Delta region. Only three (3) states in the country have an increase of over 100% in their ser-prevalence rates and two (2) out of three (3) of these states are in the Niger Delta region".

Fig. 1: Oil Rich Niger Delta Region



Source: Udonwa, et al, 2004, p.5

Chronic poverty among oil fence-line communities and indeed the whole Niger Delta is singled out as the core factor responsible for the high sero-prevalence rate (Udonwa, et al, 2004). The reason for this is not far fetched. Field oil workers, who are in most times away from their families and therefore eager for sex, are the only gainfully employed

workers in and around fence-line communities ready to "throw" some good cash around teeming girls that are eager and willing to do commercial sex networking in order to cash in on the oil money displayed by oil workers. This trend is still ongoing at an alarming rate. A new dimension is currently added to the above ugly "trade". It is what is called in colloquial parlance as "credit" commercial sex networking (*sex with an oil worker for which payment for the service rendered is postponed until a later date, say at the end of the month when oil workers are paid their salaries*). This trend has caused an increase in disease burden in the oil rich region (see table 10 below).

Table 10: Disease Burden in the Niger Delta

States	Population	Diarrhea, w/o blood	Cholera	Schistosomiasis	Typhoid Fever	HIV/AIDS Prevalence
Abia	2,833,999	0	0	0	0	3.7
Akwa-Ibom	3,920,208	808	0	0	21	7.2
Bayelsa	1,703,358	0	0	0	0	4.0
C/River	2,888,966	4,869	23	0	29	12.0
Delta	4,098,391	0	0	0	0	5.0
Edo	3,218,332	982	0	0	268	4.3
Imo	3,934,899	0	0	0	0	3.1
Ondo	3,441,024	4,525	0	429	899	2.3
Rivers	5,185,400	0	0	0	0	6.6
Total (9)	31,224,332	11,184	23	429	1,217	5.4

Source: Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, p.108

Udonwa, et al (2004:4-5) worried by frightening data as above, unequivocally stated that "*in the Niger Delta Region today, nothing is more economically terrorizing, ecologically degenerating and socio-politically destabilizing than poverty, the root cause of the region's present HIV status…the Niger Delta is sick and the illness should be approached with empathy and not sympathy"*. Worried concerns as above are understandable but still remain a real threat. The reason is not far fetched as oil locations create a false atmosphere of life being sweet among fence-line communities. This false atmosphere precipitates a lot of unholy practices. "Ashawo villages", where single girls engage in sordid sex networking is commonplace. In some oil fence-line communities, an upsurge in single girls renting rooms is widely practiced.

This sordid immoral atmosphere is not without its attendant consequences. For example, cost of living suddenly becomes skyrocketing, with prices of common household commodities beyond the reach of the common people who have little or nothing to benefit from the oil environment, there is moral decadence in the family institution (e.g. sharp disagreements within families arising from legally married wives engaging sex networking), collapse of marriages (e.g. house wives splitting from husbands so as to par take in the sex trade) and its resultant effect in single parenthood. It is such sad tales from Bonny that precipitated Jike (2004:697) to observe that *"there is a compelling need to believe that the institution of marriage as it is traditionally conceived has been largely defiled and compromised. The wives' tales coming out of Bonny where the LNG projects are located are that many wives abandon matrimony in preference for young White oil workers who have more than enough money to spend as opposed to their struggling husbands. The link between husband and wife becomes more tenuous as the financial wherewithal of the husband diminishes. As expected, among young couples divorce is on the rise, once-revered values have become supplanted by fads, and the prospects of institutional continuity have become more cumbersome".*

(d) Decrease in Community Status

Oil wealth is an unearned income. Oil life in fence-line communities is one of vanity, but while it lasts such fence-line communities are seen and treated by neighbouring communities with respect, envy and contempt. Oloibiri in the early 1970s and currently Gbarain Communities in Bayelsa State are wallowing in the oil vainglory, but not without its attendant consequences as *"companies' impacts on the host communities where they operate do not abruptly end when they close down operations and go home. Rather, the way in which companies depart has a significant impact that can linger long after the mine or plant has closed. Three of the most common impacts on communities are:*

a) ***Decrease in economic status.*** *Often a company is one of few sources of income for a community, if not the only one. A company's closure can represent a return to economic hardship for its host community. If land has become unusable due to the corporate activity (for example, in case of an open pit mine) or if the community has lost its traditional survival skills during the company's presence, such hardships may even be worse than they were before the company's arrival.*

b) ***Decrease in social status.*** *The departure of a company can lead to a decrease in a social status that corporate resources had elevated. The relative increase in status that certain communities gained compared to others ends the moment the company leaves. This can even lead to conflict. For example, some villages that did not benefit from a company's presence have warned neighbouring villages that it will be your time to pay us when the company leaves,*

c) ***Decrease in company-provided services****. Companies often bring services that were not previously present, such as hospitals or road maintenance. Upon departure, there is often a decrease in quality of these services, or they are even halted altogether" (***Corporate Engagement Project, 2003:2*).***

The irony of these scenarios is that *"most companies do not give enough attention to the impact that their departure may have on surrounding communities, or how to manage that impact. Some companies do not consider an exit plan until operations draw to a close. Other companies plan an exit plan early on, but do not revise the strategy based on ongoing analysis. This is significant because (a) how a company plans its departure can have an impact on company operations while it is still open, and (b) after the company leaves, its departure continues to impact the local community and by extension determines the legacy that the company leaves behind" (*Corporate Engagement Project, 2003*).*

4. Conclusion

Social and economic life in an oil community is vanity. It is false and temporary. Sudden increase in economic and social status of people and community is often short-lived, lasting only for the duration of the TNCs' projects. Oloibiri, an erstwhile beehive of social and economic activities is a ghost town today.

Oil TNCs operating next to fence-line communities must have an exit plan designed to prepare their host communities for their eventual departure or when the tempo of oil activities in the facility would be slowed down. Company exit plan and implementation will help oil communities to look forward to returning to a lifestyle they had lived prior to the TNC's presence, no matter how tedious the transition may be. TNCs in most instances do not have exit preparatory plans for their hoist communities and so the effect/impact on host communities is better imagined.

The Nigerian state should initiate the review of suffocating petroleum related legislations such as the ***Land Use Act 1978, the Petroleum Act 1969, the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) Act (NESRA Act, 2007)***, etc. Also, existing environment/oil industry regulatory agencies in the country (e.g. ***Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), NESRA, etc)***, etc, be made to work to full capacity. The collaboration or reliance of regulatory agencies on oil TNCs for information on spill site assessments and such logistics as transportation to spill sites, machinery and personnel for sundry assessments purposes, etc, is suspicious and therefore, findings/results from regulatory agencies are seen as being compromised from fence-line/host communities' perspective.

Notes

1. Areas with high human population, navigable waters or environments unusually sensitive to oil spills-drinking water areas, or productive ecosystems,

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