
Corruption and Environmental Degradation in Nigeria and Its Niger Delta

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Abstract: *Over the years, apparently due to the centrality of oil in the political economy of Nigeria's Niger Delta, there has been so much emphasis on issues of environmental degradation relating to oil. Yet there exists a number of factors, such as corruption which has been the focus of this paper, which are wrecking havoc on the environment and, or make such environmental assaults as may be attributable to oil, possible or worse than they could have been. In its analysis therefore, this paper takes a look at how issues such as urban development and lumbering among others, are being handled and the role corruption plays in leaving them unaddressed thereby worsening these ecological menaces. This paper, in its recommendations, makes a case for ecological governance as a way out, but stresses too that success in this area would only come if it is adopted and applied with sincerity of purpose. Though, while this paper lays emphasis on the Niger Delta, a general assessment of this situation in Nigeria was deemed necessary.*

Keywords: Corruption, Degradation, Environment, Pollution, Political Will.

1. Introduction

Alongside the devastation of oil exploration in the Niger Delta, skewed national government policies and corruption among state and local government officials have been deemed responsible for the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. However, despoliation of the environment, is not restricted to the Niger Delta alone, as the south east of the country has consistently been plagued by erosion, and the north by desertification and drought, and corruption has ensured that these problems have remained untackled, addressed only by lip service.

It has been noted that in countries where corruption is high, especially in mineral rich states, budgetary appropriations are often systematically structured to enrich those who control the levers of power. A common way of doing this consists in concentrating huge public expenditures on over priced white elephant projects with little or no relevance to public welfare, but which usually offers unlimited opportunity for officials to line their pockets through kickbacks paid by contractors. This trend tallies with the World Bank's description of corruption "as the illegal diversion of state revenues as well as patronage or nepotism by government officials or theft of state assets." (The World Bank, 1997:8). The World Bank's assessment corroborates the popularly held view that corruption is the 'abuse of public office for private gain'. This includes situations where public officials accept, solicit or extort bribes and where private actors offer bribes to circumvent or subvert public policies for competitive advantage and profit.

2. The Environment and Its Sustenance

Environment, as conceptualized in this discourse implies "the surrounding conditions that affect people and other organisms" (Adeyemo, 2008: 7). Bothering about the environment cannot be helped. This is because the environment is the home of man and he depends on it for sustenance of his livelihood, thus "protection of the environment is also seen as an essential part of development." (Salau, 1993: 425). On this premise, there arises the need for the protection of the environment. One of the means of protecting the environment is through the promulgation of the environmental policies, which "at governmental, institutional or corporate levels is concerned with protecting human health, natural resources, restoration and preservation of the environment" (Adeyemo, 2008: 7). It is one thing to protect the environment; it is another to sustain such protection. As opined by Uwaloma and Ranti (2007:856), "sustainability is concerned with the effect which action taken in the present has upon the options available in the future. If resources are utilized in the present, then they are no longer available for use in the future... Thus, raw

materials 'which' are finite in quantity and once used are available for future use." Environmental sustainability therefore implies that society must use no more of a resource than can be regenerated" (Uwaloma and Ranti, 2007: 857). It is for this reason policies on environmental sustainability are made. But before analyzing how far these policies or efforts at regeneration and preservation have succeeded in Nigeria, it would be appropriate to understand the term and discuss, in view of the focus of this paper, the impact of corruption.

3. A Brief Discourse on Corruption

There has been so much talk about corruption in Nigeria so much so that there is the temptation one need not spend much time on the subject. Needless to say, for over two decades, the country has always been among the thirty most corrupt nations in the world. This state of affairs has had far reaching consequences on all spheres of life within the country. The fact that there is so much suffering amidst plenty and a mismanagement of resources has been blamed on corruption. But knowing corruption is one thing, understanding it is another.

Scholars of state theory, however aver that there are varying forms of corruption, but all of which fall into two categories – *out of law corruption* and *in-law corruption*. The everyday conception of corruption which consists in the illegal giving and receiving of gratification and use or mismanagement of state/communal resources for personal gains falls within the sphere of *out of law* corruption. As the name implies, it is an action outside the confines of the law hence the name *out of law* and hence it is illegal and punishable. Persons, groups of persons and private institutions are often the culprits in this realm.

More socially devastating however is *in-law/legal* corruption of which scholars of state theory agree "is a great deal socially stronger, a way more socially influential and is much less visible than ordinary illegal corruption" (cf. [www.state.110mb](#): 62-63). This is so because its perpetrators are the state bureaucracies (the Executive, Legislative, Judiciary, Government Ministries and Agencies).

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In-law corruption consists in serving and increasing state monopoly/interests as well as increasing revenue accruing to state proprietors at the expense of the public through increasing the inefficiency of state bureaucracy. This is most evident in the duplication of government programmes and agencies which are financed with tax payers income, yet the problem necessitating the creation of these agencies remain or worsen. A 2009 report on government and agencies in the US notes; “there were 1,013 Federal programs in 1985, while today there are 1,390 Federal programmes administered by 53 departments and agencies. To support these programmes and the bureaucracies that run them, Federal income tax receipts today have grown 13 times higher than they were in 1960. As the agency by agency survey findings indicate, numerous Federal activities are chronically ineffective and wasteful.”

In Nigeria, despite the existence of the federal and state ministries of environment, the Federal Disaster Relief and Protection Agency was created to address natural disasters before they occur or alleviate hardships when they do occur. Despite its existence and funds accruing to it, the federal government deemed it fit to still create an Ecological Fund. More than a decade after, ecological problems are still as hard biting or have become more devastating. Such examples of in-law corruption abound; the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) and National Food, Drugs and Administration Control (NAFDAC), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Ministry of the Niger Delta, Federal Ministers and Ministers of State (who are without administrative powers, yet their offices are financed by the Nigerian state). At present, the inefficiency of most state governors and the notion that they constitute cogs in the wheel of progress through their interference in local governance which makes local government administrators redundant, servile, inefficient and inconspicuous, lends credence to the argument brewing in some quarters that Nigeria would fare better with two tiers of government (federal and local) in which case state governments should be scrapped. This latter contention however, is a discourse for another day. The World Bank, in its 2009 yearly report

on Africa Development Indicators, came up with the term *quiet corruption*. This consists in the non-deliverance of goods and services paid for and provided by the government, but these goods and services are hanging between the government and the public officials who are supposed to deliver them. The report observed that “One of the most damaging aspects of quiet corruption is that it can have long term consequences.... A child denied a proper education because of absentee teachers will suffer in adulthood with low cognitive skills and weak health.... This is pervasive and widespread across Africa and is having a disproportionate effect on the poor with long term consequences for development.” (Olajide, 2010: 23). In line with this, an observer notes “the citizens do a lot of things quietly that will lead to non-complementing of government reforms and activities.”

Drawing from the example on education above, schools with poor supervision (absentee teachers) are often found in urban shanties and underdeveloped rural areas, which result from poor planning and failed development programmes, the bulk of which can be attributed to corruption on the part of government officials. Where shanties exist, there is always environmental degradation of sorts.

4. Corruption and Degradation in the Delta

It would be appropriate to begin our discourse on what could arguably be considered the most glaring account of environmental degradation (not related to oil) occasioned by corruption in the Niger Delta. On July 24 1987, Nigerians woke up to the news of toxic wastes dumped in the little town of Koko in Nigeria’s Niger Delta, all the way from Italy. The saga revolved around two Italian businessmen (Raffaelli and Pent) who signed an illegal agreement with a Nigerian businessman (Sunday Nana) to use the latter’s property for storage of 18,000 drums of hazardous waste for approximately \$100 a month. The wastes, which were imported as *substances relating to the building trade and as residual and allied chemicals*, contained not only PCB, but

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also asbestos fiber and dioxin. The Nigerian government heard of the toxic waste when the barrels in which they were contained had begun leaking. So poisonous were its contents that:

It affected the entire town of Koko by polluting the ground in which they grew their food and on which the children played. When the barrels were later transported back to Italy it was discovered that they were in such poor condition that the water surrounding the ship was contaminated with some of the toxic wastes. As a result, the plant and animal vegetation in the water was endangered. The wastes that were sent to Nigeria from Italy not only polluted Koko, Nigeria, but it also polluted the waters outside the port of Livorno, Italy.
(www.american.edu/projects/mandala/TED)

The Wikipedia encyclopedia (2009) defines toxic waste as:

Waste material that can cause death or injury to creatures. It spreads quite easily and can contaminate lakes and rivers... Toxic waste comes in many forms, such as liquid, solid, or sludge, and it contains chemicals, heavy metals, radiation, dangerous pathogens or other toxin. Toxic wastes often contain carcinogens, and exposure to these by some route such as leakage or evaporation from storage, causes cancer to appear at increased frequency in exposed individuals”

Investigations into the Koko toxic waste dumping issue revealed that prior to its exposure, there was a conspiracy between S.I. ECOMAR (Italy), its Nigerian agent (Raffaelli) and most shockingly, the Nigerian Pharmaceutical Board, which issues licenses to facilitate the importation of toxics into Nigeria. Inspectors at the port were also part of the conspiracy because they benefited from the syndicate. In reference to that period, Edokpayi (1988) notes that, over 35 million tonnes ‘of toxic waste’ was exported annually of which the linkman in Nigeria was known to make between 20 and 25 million naira from the deals.

The involvement of the Pharmaceutical Board and the inspectors could be discerned to be more out of greed than poverty, but for Sunday Nana, the Koko businessman directly involved in the case, his was more out of poverty and ignorance, offshoots of bad governance and corruption which impoverishes the society and of which indigenes of the Niger Delta are among the worst hit.

A 1995 study conducted by the World Bank indicated that in Port Harcourt, most of the polluting output from service function such as hotels, restaurants, repair and maintenance crafts; has been assumed to equal the amounts being spilled from major enterprises. This situation, the study showed was not helped by the epileptic electricity supply in the country which warrants the use of self-generated power standby generators which emit poisonous fumes hazardous to health. (World Bank Report, 1997: 46). Fifteen years later, the story of power supply is still the same despite the large amounts spent on the power sector to revamp its facilities for effective power generation and supply. The 2006 and 2007 national budget allocations to the energy sector were N78 and N105 billion respectively, but corruption within government and the power sector have ensured the latter remains inept. Little wonder the 2007 Nigeria Corruption Index rates the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN: the body saddled with the generation and supply of electricity) as the second most corrupt institution in Nigeria (Ketefe, 2007: 7)

In the Niger Delta where the poverty level is exacerbated by the high cost of living, the state governments report that only 20-25% of rural communities and 45-50% of urban areas have access to safe drinking water. In all likelihood, this is an overestimate. Proper sanitation is available to less than 25% of the population. Though this situation is common to much of Nigeria, but it is worse in the delta regions, where it is additionally exacerbated in the areas of regular flooding. Water related diseases are widespread and probably the central health problem in the Niger Delta. A UNDP (2006) report establishes a cycle between oil, migration and environmental pollution. The report states that migrants come from all over the country

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seeking opportunities from oil production. While some end up in the cities, a large proportion settle in the rural areas and fill in the gaps left by the outward migrating local people. These migrant settlers become farmers, artisans, fishers quarry operators and middlemen. But because they are migrants, they are not interested in resource conservation and environmental protection since their main motive is profit maximization. These migrant middle men collect products for transportation to urban markets and pressure local producers to meet their demand for goods which include weed for fuel and construction, fibres, leaves, dye, fruits, roots, nuts and much more. These activities reduce forest cover, thereby degrading the environment further. As noted by Uyigüe and Agho (2007: 6), “one important feature observed in the region is the almost complete absence of primary forests. This may be partly due to climate change and partly due to human activities. Uncontrolled logging, agricultural activities, acid rain, oil exploration and exploitation, urbanization and mining activities contribute to lose vegetation.”

The time frame between the two reports presented above (ie 1995-2006) shows that not much has changed in the Niger Delta. This state of affairs poses a salient question: Why are local people disempowered to the point where they migrate from their areas and leave the running of their rural economy to migrants? The contention of this question is, if local people were empowered in the rural areas, facilities in urban towns to which they migrate would not be over-stretched. Wastes and other forms of environmental pollution in the urban centres would be better managed. Just as important too is the fact that if they were empowered, rather than leave, they would stay and manage the economy of their areas and most probably ensure the protection of their environment in the process.

In view of the above argument, it can be deduced that disempowerment of local people and the influx of *temporary resident migrants* to rural areas are major factors in the process of environmental degradation not related to oil. However, in view of the theory of cause and effect, there are bound to be factors responsible for the distortion of economic and social life of rural inhabitants and the inadequacy of urban facilities.

While life in many rural areas of the Niger Delta may not be brutish, it certainly is dehumanizing due to the dire lack of basic facilities for the healthy existence of inhabitants. The absence of roads, electricity, safe drinking water, poor sanitary conditions and waste management cannot be blamed on oil. Ayanruoh (2006: 39) bemoans this situation when in reference to the Niger Delta, he states; “the whole area is inflicted with pains and burdens hardly paralleled with what obtains in any other region in the whole history of civilized Nigeria.” Ironically, leaders, both political and traditional in the region have contributed to the despoliation, poverty and suffering in the region. Or how else can these leaders and others in places of authority explain the ugly truth that despite the large amounts of money accruing to the Niger Delta states and their local governments, the people have remained so deprived? The tables below (derived from annual random sampling) depicts monthly revenue allocations to the Niger Delta States and Local Governments between 2006 and 2008. Each month is meant to give a rough estimate of what these states and local governments receive annually.

Fig. 1.1: Revenue Allocation to (Niger Delta) States & Local Governments by Federation Account Committee for October 2008

State	No. of Local Govts	State Allocation	Local Govt Allocation	Total
Akwa-Ibom	31	13,033,219,895.17	2,949,021,215.90	15,982,241,111.07
Bayelsa	8	9,248,974,700.41	943,591,753.75	10,192,566,454.16

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Cross Rivers	18	3,260,188,045.50	1,671,009,707.49	4,931,197,752.99
Delta	25	9,067,358,134.24	2,485,840,702.10	11,553,198,836.34
Rivers	23	19,626,977,602.03	3,682,889,243.62	23,309,866,845.65
Total	105	54,236,718,377.35	11,732,353,222.86	65,969,071,000.21

Source: Reports of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Abuja

Fig. 1.2: Revenue Allocation to (Niger Delta) States and Local Governments by Federation Account Committee for June 2007

State	No. of Local Govts	State Allocation	Local Govt Allocation	Total
Akwa Ibom	31	13,683,059,361.83	2,599,380,619.92	16,282,439,981.85
Bayelsa	8	8,517,449,345.74	902,727,897.60	9,420,177,243.34
Cross Rivers	18	3,034,277,976.57	1,758,011,858.36	4,792,289,834.93
Delta	25	9,212,365,263.54	2,329,117,498.40	11,541,482,761.94
Rivers	23	21,211,598,487.15	3,407,873,817.54	24,619,472,304.69
Total	105	55,658,750,434.83	10,997,111,691.82	66,655,862,126.75

Source: Reports of the Federal Ministry of Finance Abuja

Fig. 1.3: Revenue Allocation to (Niger Delta) States and Local Governments by Federation Account Committee for August 2006

State	No. of Local Govts	State Allocation	Local Govt Allocation	Total
Akwa-Ibom	31	6,523,621,240.96	1,844,631,279.82	8,368,252,520.78
Bayelsa	8	8,252,586,910.87	656,227,894.86	8,908,814,805.73
Cross Rivers	18	1,817,085,056.81	1,231,865,535.12	3,048,950,591.93
Delta	25	7,258,239,321.10	1,652,660,035.05	8,910,899,356.25
Rivers	23	10,569,232,346.02	1,702,404,744.94	12,271,637,090.96
Total	105	34,420,764,875.76	7,087,789,489.79	41,508,554,365.65

Source: Reports of the Federal Ministry of Finance Abuja

It would be noticed from the table above that there was a sharp increase (63.2%) in allocated revenue in 2007 and 2008 as compared to 2006. The land mass has remained the same, yet no marked improvement in infrastructures or the lives of the inhabitants of the Delta and ecological problems worsen by the day. This brings to mind once again the World Bank's definition of corruption which says it is the illegal diversion of state revenues as well as patronage or nepotism by government officials or theft of state assets.

Imagine the remedial efforts the monies accruing to the Niger Delta states would have achieved had they been judiciously used in light of the following realities; Coastal erosion which according to the World Bank needs moderate priority attention in the Niger Delta (Agbola and Olurin 2003). Problems associated with sea level rise and repeated ocean surges such as worsening coastal erosion that are already a menace in the Niger Delta, along with the associated inundation which will increase problems of floods,

intrusion of sea-water into fresh water sources and ecosystems destroying such stabilizing systems as mangrove, and affecting agriculture, fisheries and general livelihoods (Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team, 2004). Also as noted by Awosika (2005) “settlements in the coastal region have been uprooted by coastal erosion. In some places, especially in Forcados, some oil wells have been lost to the ocean due to erosion. Coastal erosion poses serious problems for the economic activities in the Niger Delta.... Coastal vegetation especially the mangroves have been lost to coastal erosion.” The devastation of these natural hazards could have been minimized as well as the suffering meted could have as well been averted or cushioned if only some of these monies were ploughed into research along with planning and implementation.

Having discussed how ineffective power supply occasioned by corruption contributes to environmental pollution as seen in Port Harcourt via the use of generators by private residents (which has been sometimes fatal as families are known to have been wiped out from inhaling the poisonous fumes) and businesses, and the effects of deforestation and erosion which are accentuated by poor planning/lack of preparedness, we at this juncture turn attention to other adverse effects of corruption on the environment. This time however, this paper shall extend its scope beyond the Niger Delta.

5. Around and Beyond the Niger Delta

The initial intention of this research was to focus mainly on the Niger Delta. The shortage of funds however, restricted me to two of the six Niger Delta states namely Rivers and Bayelsa States. Visits to the Ministries of Environment and Forest preservation agencies in their capital cities (PortHarcourt and Yenagoa respectively) were unfruitful, as they possessed little or no data that would have been beneficial to this research. As a result, in a bid to drive the point home still, it became pertinent to expand the scope of this research since corruption is not akin to the Niger Delta region only and neither is environmental degradation/pollution a strictly riverine affair. Though both

issues are global, this research makes its examination from a national perspective.

A *Thisday* report had the following caption: *Nigeria Lost 37.5% forest reserve in 15 years*. The report went further to state “more than 37 percent of the country’s forest reserves were lost between 1990 and 2005 as a result of illegal and uncontrolled logging, incessant bush burning, fuel wood gathering and clearing of forests for other land uses.” (Kolawole (ed.), 2009). Of the aforementioned activities through which deforestation takes place, illegal logging is definitely a corrupt practice. This example also shows that citizens, through their negative activities, help to destroy the environment. However, why would people be involved in the aforementioned practices when it is known that among “the negative impact of deforestation on the country’s economy are, declining soil productivity, desertification, loss of aquatic life, coastal/soil erosion, biodiversity, water and air pollution ... drying up water bodies, erratic flooding causing loss of life and property and diseases.”

Hochachka (2006) makes a sound analysis of this situation when he posits that Nigeria’s 130 million people put too much pressure on her dwindling forest resources despite the fact that these reserves help to stabilize local weather patterns. This pressure he avers, arises out of the fact that, Nigeria, Africa’s most populous nation, has had her revenues squandered through corruption and mismanagement and has left the country ranked 151st out of 171 countries worldwide on the *Human Development Index*. He puts it succinctly when he says, “Nigeria is representative of sustainability issues in Sub-Saharan Africa, in which poverty and corruption are intermingled, both adding to ongoing ecological degradation. Environmental sustainability is impossible without addressing the socio-economic needs in the villages. Poverty is in turn exacerbated by declining natural resources, and vice versa.” Due to the high level of poverty in the country, demand for wood for cooking/fuel wood is very high. The fall out, as projected by a UN report on climate change, is that “the annual demand for fuel wood in Nigeria is expected to rise from 74 million tones in 1999 to 100 million by 2030” (Adefaye, 2007:5).

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The story of Adamu, a 50-year-old herdsman from Ngelzarma village in Yobe state tells the grim picture of desertification in the northern part of Nigeria. He laments that as a boy, he used to move a mere shouting distance away from his village to graze his cattle. Now, the old grazing land is gone and he is forced to cover distances sometimes as far as outside the country in search of pasture and water. Abubakar Ali alludes to this experience when he posits that farmlands have been overtaken by sand dunes and severe water shortage has necessitated the migration of people to areas where they can farm and find pasture for cattle. (Omotoso, 2010: C2). The implication of this migration is obvious. Pressure is put on whatever arable land is left. Without control and effective management, it becomes barren and enables the desert sands stretch further. Surprisingly and ironically too, hardly a year passes in Nigeria without afforestation campaigns being flagged off to check desert encroachment. How many more millions of dollars is the country to lose still at the expense of the suffering the millions of suffering poor? As a report states, “no fewer than 35 million people located in about 11 states in northern Nigeria (Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Bauchi, Yobe, Borno, Gombe and Kaduna) are facing threats of hunger and extreme weather conditions due to desert encroachment on arable lands and grazing fields.”

A Reuters 2004 report claimed that “corruption and mismanagement are reported to swallow about 40 percent of Nigeria’s \$20 billion annual income.” This claim is corroborated by Dimeji Bankole, the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Nigeria’s lower chamber) when he noted that “about 65 percent of the fund allocated by the Federal Government in its yearly budget cannot be accounted for or traced” (Osagie, 2009:15). This assertion lends credence to Odunlami (2004) when he contends that, “despite its oil riches, 70 percent of Nigeria’s population live below the poverty line, with corruption remaining a way of life.” Elendu (2003) (in Hochachka 2006) adds; “Although the country is renowned for its oil and gas resources, extremely little of the revenue from this industry is re-circulated into the civil infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and roads. While Nigeria is the sixth largest producer of crude oil in the world, due to mismanagement of the economy, Nigerian people rank

amongst the poorest in the world.” For this reason, shanties abound everywhere, along with the poor living condition associated with them and the health hazards they portend.

Nigeria as a country possesses varying terrains. From the desert plains of the north, to the highlands in the east, the rocky hills of the west, to the mangrove swamps of the south. With each of these terrains comes its own unique ecological problem. From desertification in the north, to flooding in the south and erosion in the east. To help combat these problems, the Ecological Fund was set up in 1985 by the Ibrahim Babangida administration. But since its establishment, like many other laudable ideas, corruption has rendered it ineffective so much so that the Senate Committee on Environment and Ecology, in August 2008 advocated the scrapping of the Ecological Fund office, saying it had outlived its usefulness” (Ojeifo, 2008). Before the pronouncement of the Senate, Anayo Onwuegbu (in Akunna 2004) had endeavoured to explain the need for the Ecological Fund and why it had been ineffective. He posits thus:

There is a very serious threat to Nigeria’s ecological balance. From Lagos to Maiduguri and from Uyo to Gombe, the ecological problems are as diverse as the communities which they torment ... The Federal Government would have recorded a higher degree of success far in excess of what is on ground today ...had the governors displayed a sense of commitment and accountability to the allocation from the fund when they come...You can hardly get to any state and see any ecological project of note that the governor has done with the money collected ... Things would have been a lot better for the rural dwellers and all those affected by the menace posed by ecological problems if the governors injected, say 30 percent of what they get from the fund into the projects. The nauseating thing about the attitude of the governors ... is that some of them consider the fund *pocket money* to be expended at their whims and caprices.

Reminiscent of this analysis is the Joshua Dariye (one time governor of Plateau State) case. His abuse of the ecological

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fund had him fingered by the Federal Government for corrupt practices. According to Abati (2006):

Dariye says public funds to the tune of N1.16 billion was taken from his state to finance the 2003 elections... And to think that it is the ecological fund that has been so abused shows the crassness of the ruling elite. Plateau state has serious ecological problems; N 1.16 billion could have made a lot of difference in the lives of the people. And this is the bigger issue. In all this, the people are the losers.

More recently are the claims and counter claims between the Abia state government (south east Nigeria) and permanent secretary of the Ecological Fund office on non-receipt of the ecological fund accruable to the state. As Mustapha (2010) reports:

The recent claim by Abia state government that with over 2,000-gully erosion in the state, it has not received monies from the Ecological Fund in the past two years has been debunked by the Permanent Secretary of Ecological of Ecological Fund office, Mrs Ibukun Odunsote. She explained that ... "there is no state that has not at any time benefited from the funds that are available through the office. It is very untrue because the facts are on the table. In fact the southeast states have so much of ecological fund.

What makes the Ecological Fund more controversial is the non-availability of records to tell how much is set aside each year, how much money or how often these monies are distributed to the states. The shrouding in mystery of monies accruable to the Ecological Fund and how they are disbursed warrants and encourages its abuse. Take for instance the following report by Suleiman (2009):

Abuja – Minister of Environment Mr. John Odey has said the Federal Government has approved a new guideline for the disbursement of Ecological Funds after due consultation.... Drought and Desertification control will receive 60%, Soil Erosion, Flood/Gully

control takes 25%, and Pollution control has 5%, while Administration will gulp 10%

It is interesting to observe from the aforementioned report that no sum was indicated. So the percentages given are percentages of what amount precisely? Such is the corruption that has bedeviled the Ecological Fund that there is no iota of accountability, and environmental degradation continues almost unabated.

On the other hand, the Federal Ministry of Environment was created in 1999 with the fundamental objectives of securing a quality environment adequate for good health and well being, conserving and using the environment's natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Thus, the policy thrust of the Ministry has continued to revolve around the Environmental Renewal and Development Initiative (ERDI) whose primary objectives are to take full inventory of the country's natural resources, assess the level of environmental damage and design and also implementing restoration and rejuvenation measures to address municipal waste management and sanitation, industrial pollution control including oil and gas, afforestation and conservation of biodiversity and wildlife. These being the objectives of the Federal Ministry of Environment, the experiences and environmental data presented in this paper shows that, it has failed abysmally like most other ministries in Nigeria. This conclusion cannot be otherwise in view of the alleged \$108m foreign grant (approx N1.6t = one point six trillion naira) accorded the Ministry for projects since 2002 (Presidential Research and Communications Unit, 2003)

Due to corruption, most public facilities are dead and public services are inept. A Punch newspaper report, for example, stated that; "The Minister for Education, Mrs Obiageli Ezekwesili ... wept as she presented the state of decay of many public-owned primary and secondary schools in the country ... the minister noted that only 20 percent of children of school age in Nigeria had access to quality education ... of the 42.1 million children in the country, only 22.3 million were in school" (in Olugbile, 2007:10). She

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concluded that all the tiers of government were to blame for the rot in public schools. One major worry here is that while our greed today contributes to the destruction of our environment, our actions also deprive future generations of competent hands and heads to brace up to tomorrow's challenges. As a result, we not only rob today's children of tomorrow's resources, but in educating them poorly, we also create in them, an inability to properly analyze situations and make informed decisions. This definitely is a recipe for a worsening environment.

Before rounding up this discussion, our examination of corruption and environmental degradation would not be complete without touching on the role citizens play to exacerbate corruption's effects. Illegal logging, lack of respect for forest reserves, diversion of funds meant for addressing environmental issues have already been mentioned as some of the many means through which citizens contribute to environmental degradation. It is disheartening to note that at times, whole communities constitute the cog in the wheel of progress. Communities have been known to obstruct government efforts at preserving the environment. As Onwuegbu (in Akunna, op.cit.) states:

Sometimes you find yourself in communities that will not be interested in allowing you do the job. There is often this erroneous belief that since money is being spent on us, we should decide how it will be spent, they see it as a windfall... Sometimes, the elites of the community might corner you to a meeting and start making demands... They would rather have us give them the money that allows the job be done.

This trend has been exhibited by a lot of communities in the Niger Delta and has obstructed development efforts such as the provision of roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and electricity. This has often pitched construction firms and contractors against *intended beneficiary communities*. Such confrontations often end in the contractors and firms abandoning the project. What then can be done to turn things around?

6 Addressing the Issues

There is no doubt that to turn things around, the *will* to tame the environment must first be there. Without this, the trend toward corruption will keep having the upper hand and continue making mince meat of environmental friendly efforts. Developing the *will* is a personal moral issue that borders on patriotism and civic responsibility. This will not be stretched any further here. Next to developing the will is what M'Gonigle (2002) calls *ecological governance* which involves a restructuring of many societal system. "To this end, ecological governance offers alternatives to extractive, linear and unsustainable (socio-economic) systems that continue to level ancient forests, displace indigenous and local communities, and clog global cities, Instead, ecological governance asks how we might foster circular systems where we reduce our demands on ever more supply."

One way of infusing our people, most especially the rural folk into ecological governance is by weaving its aims into the cultural norms of the people. For example, making people see the need to preserve the forests and certain animal and plant specie. In so doing, poaching and illegal felling might eventually be considered culturally inappropriate. Thus ecological governances infuses cultural norms and it attempts to provide a socially valid foundation for the processes of making decisions. From this perspective, Hochachka (op.cit.: 5) says, "the individual contains his or her own ecological governance system embedded within his or her own intentions and actions." Accordingly then, civil society and civil society organizations play an important role in promoting good governance and also leading the process toward ecological governance. Ecological governance therefore advocates the following

- Teacher Training in environmental education
- Community based research and impact assessment.
- Participation in policy advocacy, formulation and intervention.

Ecological governance, for it to succeed requires a systematic effort driven by government, in partnership with the private

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sector and civil society. Certain moves have been made in the Nige Delta at protecting the environment. In Cross Rivers State for example, from 2004, the state government has partnered with One Sky, a Canadian Non-Governmental Organization in preserving its forests and thus saving some endangered primate specie. Larney (2006:13) reports that “Shell Petroleum Development Company has earmarked N131 million for the conservation of the Gele-Gele and Urhonigbe forest reserves in Edo State.” Laudable as these efforts are, their success depends on the sincerity of purpose and verve with which they are pursued. The Niger Delta states, with the approximately N70 billion that accrues to them collectively, have enough to tackle the ecological problems they are faced with and preserve the delicate ecosystem in which they live.

Taking recommendations made here into consideration, not much attention was paid to corruption and deliberately so. There is no panacea nor is there any theory for its eradication. To stem corruption hinges largely on the will of the ruling elite. For as Napoleon Bonaparte once said: There are no bad soldiers, only bad officers. In other words, a people are just as corrupt as their leaders. But as this paper has shown, corruption threatens environmental sustainability, and by extension, our/human existence.

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