

# Community Understanding Of The Environmental And Socio-Economic Consequences Of Petroleum Exploitation In Ogoni, Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Dr. Tombari Bodo**

Department of Geography and Natural Resource Management,  
University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. +2348062894010.  
*tombarib@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper was to examine the community understanding of the environmental and socio-economic consequences of petroleum exploitation in Ogoni, Rivers State. To achieve this aim, the objectives were to determine the level of community awareness to environmental issues and how these communities understand the consequences of pollution on their environment. The survey design method was employed. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 21 oil bearing communities from the four Local Government Areas of Ogoniland. The data were collected using unstructured interviews, focus group discussions, oral testimonies and questionnaires. Transcriptions, rewriting and coding were employed in data analysis, except for the questionnaires which adopted descriptive statistical methods. Results showed that the level of community awareness to environmental issues is very high, as they accessed vital information about their environment through different sources on a regular basis. The results further revealed that majority of the respondents are very knowledgeable on the environmental consequences of pollution to their environment and health; but decided to stay in it and fight for freedom. The resultant effect is that the Ogoni environment has become tense and hot with a lot of bitterness and violence like a lifestyle. It is therefore recommended that with the increasing level of environmental pollution in Ogoniland; the necessary laws on environmental protection should be adequately enforced against further pollution of the environment, and immediate environmental remediation should be carried where pollution has occurred.

**Keywords:** Awareness, community understanding, consequences, exploitation and pollution.

## 1. Introduction

The Nigeria economy relies solely on the revenue from oil for its survival and the petroleum industry has been playing a leading role and occupies a strategic position in the economic development of Nigeria [4]. It is reported that the total oil revenue generated into the Federation Account from 2000 to 2009 which amounted to N34.2 trillion while non-oil was N7.3 trillion, representing 82.36% and 17.64% respectively. On the average, the value of oil revenue for the past 10 years period is N3.42 trillion compared to non-oil revenue at N732.2 billion [7]. It was also revealed that for a ten year's period, the average crude oil and condensates production is 832,866,752.1 barrels from 2000 to 2009 [7]. The importance of crude oil to the economic development of Nigeria cannot be over emphasized; Nigeria gained an extra \$390 billion in oil-related fiscal revenue between 1971 and 2005 [7]. All these statistics show that petroleum is essential to the Nigeria state whose large economy rest solely from the proceeds of petroleum resources. Most State Governments rely solely on these petroleum revenues to pay salaries of workers and carry out developmental projects. Through the petroleum industries, a lot of youths has employed through the procurement of advance technologies, operation of refineries, gas turbine and plants [11]. Despite this numerous advantages of petroleum exploitation that cannot be overlooked, some researchers have reported that the economy has been engulfed by continuous underdevelopment evidenced by poor human developmental and economic indices including poor income distribution, militancy and oil violence in the Niger Delta, endemic corruption, unemployment, relative poverty [5], [6], [11]. Some feel that irrespective of Nigeria's huge oil wealth, the country has remained one of the poorest in the world. The Niger delta has become the main stay of Nigeria economy. Some

researchers have reported that the problems with Nigerian economy may be traced to failure of successive governments to use oil revenue and excess crude oil income effectively in the development of other sectors of the economy. Also, the poor performances of national institutions such as power, energy, road, transportation, politics, financial systems, and investment environment have been deteriorating and inefficient [11]. Some scholars reported that outside of the energy sector, Nigeria's economy is highly inefficient. Moreover, human capital is underdeveloped [5], [6]. All these abnormality all points to one obvious problem, which is environmental pollution of the Niger Delta. Environmental pollution of the entire Niger Delta that resulted from petroleum exploitation is no longer new to the people in the region [11]. On many occasions, the staffs of the multinational oil companies have been attacked by their host communities and several other cases of vandalism of pipelines [12]. Beyond economic failure, oil is now a human security issue with about 1,547 and 4,548 victims nationwide in incidents related respectively to violence in oil production and distribution in 2006-2014 [12]. The oil bearing communities have often time shut down the operations of the multinational oil companies in protest against further pollution of their land. Hamilton [11] cited okoko, 1996; that between 1998 and 1992, SPDC, lost a total of 1,263 operational days due to community disturbances. There had been cases of may-hem in Toru-Ndoro, which lead to the dethronement of a paramount ruler due to accusations of bribes collection from the MNOCs against the community decision [11]. During the SPDC and Ojobo crises, SPDC flow station was shut down for 30 days and the company lost about \$105 million within this period [11]. Individuals in the Niger Delta communities have in a bid to overcome the problem of disempowerment result from marginalization and the

destruction of their local economies and environment; take to sabotage of oil installations [3]. The fishermen and farmers in demand for justice asked for compensation for their rivers and farmlands. The people in the Niger Delta feel cheated and outsmarted from benefiting from their own resources leading to several forms of activism in the past. The people's view and feelings about their environment have not been put into consideration; and several years of oil exploitation has also resulted in an impoverished region [2]. The solutions to this unending pollution and violence in the Ogoniland may lie in solving the problem of the people in line with what they really want, rather than what government want to achieve for the bigger economy.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The population figures of Ogoni is 950,532 (comprising 218,200; 261,570; 336,267 and 134,495 for Eleme, Gokana, Khana and Tai LGAs respectively) according to the 2006 population census of Nigeria. In order to determine the projected population for this Local Government Areas in Ogoni, the National Population Commission data of 2006 was used as the base year for population projection, using the trend extrapolation technique. The sample size for the respondents was determined from the projected population through the use of the TARO YAMANE sample size determination formula using an annual growth rate of 3.2% [20]. Because of the time constraint and the wide area of coverage for this study; communities were selected based on oil bearing and oil impacted sites. Purposive sampling technique was therefore used to determine the sample. Based on the field survey and the UNEP environmental evaluation and assessment of Ogoniland [19]; there are 30 oil bearing or producing communities in Ogoniland. Out of the 30 oil bearing communities, 21 were selected based on accessibility to the main lines of communication and the security of the communities as observed during reconnaissance survey. The respondents for the study comprised of adult citizens who were 18 years and above in any occupation, that were resident within the Ogoni oil-bearing communities. This empirical study was rooted in primary and secondary data that falls within the realm of understanding of the focus of this study. Secondary data for this study was based on extensive literature review and this has helped to strengthen the arguments of this study. To obtain the primary data, structured questionnaires, informal interviews, oral testimonies, focus group discussions and field observations were used as shown on Table 1. Being qualitative; transcription, transcribing, rewriting and coding were employed in data analysis, except for the questionnaires which adopted descriptive statistical methods such as frequency counts, percentages, means scores.

**Table 1: Data Collection Distribution**

LGA	Interview	Focus Group	Oral Testimony	Questionnaire
Eleme	4	2	2	133
Gokana	5	3	3	133
Khana	4	2	1	20
Tai	4	2	2	114

Source: Field work, 2017.

## 3. Results

### Level of Community Awareness to Environmental Issues

During the field survey, respondents were asked different questions in order to extract information about their awareness to environmental issues. First, the respondents were asked questions on how they get information on the happenings about their community environment and their multiple responses are shown on table 2. The result reveals that majority of the respondents received their information from the happening around their communities through radio programme (96.25%), television programmes (78%), past activists like Ken Saro Wiwa, Ledum Mitee etc (98.75), personal observation (77%), and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) like Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Khana Gokana Tai Association (KAGOTE), Ken Saro Wiwa's Associates etc (See table 2). The respondents were further asked of how often they received or had accessed to their information sources and whether the information from these sources was useful in revealing the truths about their environment. The result from the field data reveals that 99.75% of the respondents consider the information they receives as being useful in revealing the truths about their environment. On the other hand, 1% of the respondents consider the information they do received as not being useful to them (See table 3). The field survey also reveals that most of the respondents (98.75) in the study area receive information from their sources mentioned above frequently.

**Table 2: Multiple responses on the information channels to the respondents**

S/no	Source of Information	Multiple ticks	%
1	Radio programmes	385	96.25
2	Television programmes	312	78
3	Newspaper	15	3.75
4	Bill boards and Poster	0	0
5	Pamphlets	0	0
6	International Organization like UNDP, UNEP etc	0	0
7	Past Activists like Ken Saro Wiwa, Ledum Mitee etc.	395	98.75
8	Ministry of Environment	0	0
9	Personal Observation	311	77
10	Experience Over time	250	62.50
11	Announcements in church	150	37.50
12	Community/traditional leaders	15	3.75
13	Community Based Organizations (CBOs) like MOSOP, KAGOTE etc	311	77
14	Others (please specify)	0	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

Also, the respondents were also asked whether the knowledge from the information sources have influenced their appreciation and perception of their environment. Majority of the respondents in the study area (65.50%) agreed that they have been greatly influenced, while 34.50% said they were fairly influenced. In an oral testimony conducted at Eleme Local Government Area, Mr Johnson Baate declared “there is no way an Ogoni man will be happy with the situation; our situation has transformed our thinking patterns and it may be difficult to correct”

**Table 3: Usefulness of the information sources and effects**

S/N	Questions	frequency	%
1.	<b>How often do you access these information sources mentioned above on Table 2?</b>	395	98.75
	Very often	5	1.25
	Often	0	0
	Not often		
2.	<b>Where the information you received useful in revealing the truths about your environment?</b>	399	99.75
	Useful	1	0.25
	Not useful	0	0
	Others		
3.	<b>How has the knowledge from these information sources, influenced your appreciation and perception of your environment?</b>	399	99.75
	YES	1	0.25
	NO	0	0
	Others		

Source: Fieldwork, 2017.

### The consequences of petroleum exploitation

The data collected from the field survey on whether the community dwellers understand the environmental and socio-economical consequences of pollution reveals that the respondents (99.25% of them) are very familiar with their community environment and they also claimed that their community environment was very healthy before the advent of exploitation of petroleum as shown on Table 4. The respondents in the study area acknowledged that their communities are being polluted. 4.5 % of the respondents ascribed the responsibility of the pollution to the community elders/chiefs; 25% of the respondents blame the militant groups for the pollution, while 71.75% of the respondents blame the Multinational oil companies for the pollution of their environment. Majority of the respondents (98.75%) also expressed full awareness of the implication of environmental pollution. 22.25% of the respondents also said they have relocated from their formal residence due to the intensity of pollution in the area they relocated from (See Table 4).

**Table 4: Environmental and Socio-Economic Consequences of Pollution**

Questions	Frequency	%
<b>How long have you lived in this community?</b>		
0-10 years	26	6.50
10-20 years	130	32.25
20-30years	114	28.50
30-40 years	90	22.90
40-50 years	25	6.25
>50 years	15	3.75
<b>How well do you know about your community environment?</b>		
Very well	397	99.25
Not too well	3	0.75
Others	0	0
<b>Where you living in this community before the discovery of petroleum?</b>		
YES	15	3.75
NO	385	96.25
<b>How was community life before the discovery of petroleum?</b>		
Very healthy	400	100
Not healthy	0	0
Others	0	0
<b>Do you see your community environment as being polluted?</b>		
YES	400	100
NO	0	0
<b>If YES, who is responsible?</b>		
Community elders/chiefs	0	0
Militant Group	18	4.5
Multinational Oil companies	100	25
others	287	71.75
	0	0
<b>How are you adapting to the polluted environment?</b>		
Easily	0	0
Not easily	311	77.75
Relocation	89	22.25
Others	0	0
<b>Do you know the implication of environmental pollution to your health and environment?</b>		
YES	395	98.75
NO	5	1.25

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

In one of the oral testimonies conducted, King Letam Doba of Kala Kingdom declared, “I am a legal practitioner with specialization in oil and gas, and international law of the sea; as a king of my clan, I am fully familiar with my community environment and the Ogoni atmosphere. My environment and the entire Ogoni atmosphere are polluted specifically by the Shell Petroleum Development Company, (SPDC)”. In the focus group meeting held in Community Primary School in Biara, Mr. Barika Friday remarked thus, “the pollution of the entire Ogoni environment is already a well known fact by everyone and the Shell Petroleum Development Company, (SPDC) is the sole culprit”.

#### 4. Discussion

The level of awareness of the respondents to environmental issues is very high, as they access their vital information about their community through different sources with majority of the information received were through radio (96.25%) television (78%) and past activist (98.75%). This finding is in conformity with works of Orubu [16], who assert that “there is now full awareness in the Niger Delta region about their resource”. The people of Niger Delta are very sensitive to oil related problems [17] and this is very true for the Ogoni people. The respondent in the study area receives these volumes of information about their community environment continuously. From observation, it was discovered that the people in the study area are very eager to sort vital information about their community environment themselves and could go to any length to get this their needed information. This could be because majority the people in the area are literate and can present their arguments analytically where the need arises. This could also be because of the result of past environmental advocacy that has stirred them up to fight for their freedom. They are also able to extract all the needed information with ease and accuracy. What this clearly shows is that the people cannot be deceived anymore about their own safety and wellbeing. This simply means that the leaders should be more careful as to what information they passed down to these community dwellers. This is because they seem to have different verifiable information sources from even from far beyond their environment. From field observation and reports from key informant; when the people receive information they strongly believe to be false or untrue, they could react violently to it. This assertion is in conformity with the works of Orubu [16], Agwu [1], and Eromosele [9]. Also from our observation, it was discovered that most of the violence and riots within the community were due to false information being passed to them either by the community representatives or the government personnel. The community sees such person coming to deceive them as “Vultures”. The perception of the respondents in the study has been changed completely by the information they have been receiving frequently about their environment to the extent that they no longer believe what the government has to say or what the community leaders has to say because they believe they are all lies. According to Agwu [1], the people have more facts and such could repel any false knowledge. The respondents in the study area are very familiar with their community environment and have all lived in their communities for more than 10 years (See table 4). So, the community members have stayed in their community long enough to understand the changes they see around them. Before advent of petroleum exploitation the community was very healthy and the general atmosphere was peaceful and refreshing like the respondents all confessed (see table 4). This statement confirmed Ken Saro Wiwa’s assertion that Ogoniland was once a land with beautiful atmosphere and greenly vegetables [18]. From the field observation, it was observed that the entire Ogoni environment is tense, and cold with a lot of bitterness like a lifestyle. UNEP in 2011 asserted that the entire environment in Ogoniland is polluted and cause serious damaged to the environment [19]. This atmosphere and attitude may have been created

by years of agitating for years of resource control, clashes with the military and the Multinational oil companies; and this whole situation has turned them into a very aggressive opposing forces. Majority of the respondents sees the adapting to a polluted environment as a very difficult task to do, as 22% of the respondents have already relocated from their places of residence to a new location due to intense pollution in that region. The people in the study area are very knowledgeable on the environmental consequences of pollution to their environment and their health, but they are basically indigenous people and cannot move away from their communities because of pollution; rather they want to stay and fight for their freedom. Also the cost of accommodation elsewhere is so high that they are able to afford a new accommodation and job as well. The assertion of the people that petroleum exploitation has its associated consequences is in conformity with the report of previous scholars (a few examples include those by Famuyiwa [10], Eromosele [9], Olomo and Omene [14] and Onosode [15]).

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The people of Ogoni are adequately informed about their environment and the consequences of pollution resulting from petroleum exploitation are well known to them. In order to draw government attention to plight, they have resorted to violence and protect as a means of participation and public awareness. The necessary laws on environmental protection should be adequately enforced by the government against further pollution of the environment and where pollution has occurred, an immediate remediation of such environment should be carried out. The people should be provided with the essential basic amenities and developmental projects for them to feel the benefits of the resource in their environment. This will help in building trust of the people for the government and the Multinational oil companies.

#### Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to Prof. I.E Ukpog, Dr. R. Wilcox, Dr. U.J. Ituen, Dr. E.M Akpabio, Dr. A.M. Imikan and Dr. I. E. Ansa for their academic mentorship, disposition and numerous advices all through this research. Not forgetting my field assistants, Mr. Baribor Banaavule, Mr. Kilsil-Fred Naadugha and Mr. Batombari Gbidum Gimah; I am grateful for all your contributions.

#### References

- [1]. Agwu, M.O. (2013). Community Participation and Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta. *British Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science*. 3(1): 33-46, 2013.
- [2]. Akpan N.S and Akpabio E.M (2003). Youth restiveness and violence in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Implications and suggested solutions. *International Journal of Development Issues*. 2(2): Pages 37-58
- [3]. Akpomovie, O.B (2011). Tragedy of Commons: Analysis of Oil Spillage, Gas Flaring and Sustainable Development of the Niger Delta of Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable*

Development, (2), 200-210.

- [4]. Azaiki & Shagary (2007). Oil, Gas and Life in Nigeria. Ibadan: Y – Books.
- [5]. Baghebo, M (2012). Petroleum and Energy Economics. Bayelsa: Kadmon Printing Press and Publishing House.
- [6]. Baghebo, M. and Atima, T. O. (2013). The impact of petroleum on economic growth in Nigeria. Global Business and Economics Research Journal, 2(5): 102-115.
- [7]. Central Bank of Nigeria. (2011). Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin. Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria.
- [8]. Eromosele, V. E. (1998). Costing Niger Delta's oil spills: A joint stakeholder's approach. 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Petroleum Industry and the Nigerian Environment, Abuja, November, 358-368.
- [9]. Famuyiwa, B. A. (1998) Seabed survey of the impact of oil based drilling fluid system on offshore environment. 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Petroleum Industry and the Nigerian Environment. Abuja, November, 461- 489.
- [10]. Hamilton D.I. (2011). Oil and Gas Companies and Community Crises in the Niger Delta. American Review of Political Economy, June 2011: 3-7
- [11]. James O. O. (2015). Oil Companies and Lethal Violence in Nigeria: Patterns mapping and Evolution (2006- 2014). IFRA-Nigeria Working Papers Series, No. 44.
- [12]. Okoko, K.A.B. (1996). "SPDC – Community Relations Report", submitted by SPDC at the end of sabbatical Leave, August 1996.
- [13]. Olomo, R.O. and Omene, L. (1995). Environmental impact of oil spillage: A case of the operations of Shell Petroleum Development Company in Bornu, Rivers State. Paper presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Nigerian Geographical Association, University of Benin.
- [14]. Onosode, G. (1997). Petroleum, development and the environment: NDES Perspective. pp. 287-291, In Nigerian Petroleum Business: A Handbook, Victor E. Eromosele (Ed.). Advent Communications, Lagos.
- [15]. Orubu, C. O. (2001). Compensating for trampled surface rights in the Nigerian petroleum industry: suggestion for a sustainable livelihood approach, The Nigerian Economic and Financial Review, 6 (1), 57-81.
- [16]. Orubu, C.O. (1999b). Oil wealth and the derivation principle: The need for a new fiscal imperative towards oil-producing states, Calabar. Journal of Politics and Administration, Vol. 1,189 – 211.
- [17]. Saro-Wiwa, K. (1995) Complete statement by Ken Saro-Wiwa to Ogoni Civil Tribunal, Available (online) <http://www.ratical.org/corporations/KSWstmt.html>.
- [18]. UNEP (2011). Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland. Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Environment Programme.
- [19]. Uzoagulu, E. A. (1998). Practical Guide to Writing Research Project Reports in Tertiary Institutions. Enugu: John Jacob's Classic Publisher's Limited.

### Author Profile

Dr. Tombari Bodo received the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) in Geology, Postgraduate Diploma (PDGEM) and Master of Science (MSc) in Geography and Environmental Management from the University of Port Harcourt. He has Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Environment and Development from the Department of Geography and Natural Resource Management of the University of Uyo. He also has a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) from the National Open University of Nigeria. He is currently as a Researcher with the Department of Geography and Natural Resource Management of the University of Uyo.

