

The Niger Delta: Issues of Justice and Development Agenda

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Published by:

Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)

2006

[CDD logo]

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ISBN:

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First published by the Centre for Democracy & Development (CDD, 2006)

An Integrated Approach to the Development of the Niger Delta, by Festus Iyayi
Editorials/Production: Ololade Bamidele
Cover Arts/Design:
Printing:, Lagos, Nigeria, Tel: +234

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List of abbreviations

EITI	Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative
CASS	Centre for Advanced Social Science
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDHR	Committee for the Defence of Human Rights
CLO	Civil Liberties Organization
CRC	Community Resource Centre
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
ERA	Environmental Rights Action
EU	European Union
FoEN	Friends of the Earth Nigeria
GNP	Gross National Product
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IYC	Ijaw Youth Congress
MNR	Movement for National Reformation
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
MPP3	Micro Projects Programme in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States
NAPEC	National Poverty Eradication Council
NDDB	Niger Delta Development Board
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDE	National Directorate of Employment
NDRBA	Niger Delta River Basin Authority
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NNPE	National Policy on Poverty Eradication
NSO	National Security Organisation
OMPADEC	Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission
OPC	Oodua Peoples Congress
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PTF	Petroleum Trust Fund
SAN	Senior Advocate of Nigeria
SPDC	Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria
TNC	Trans National Company
WTO	World Trade Organization

Abstract

This discussion presents an integrated approach to the development of the Niger Delta. By an integrated approach, we mean a development strategy and process that takes into account and therefore addresses within a single framework, both the justifiable and or justiceable interests of the various groups of people in the situation and the multidimensional nature of the 'problem of development' in the Niger Delta.

Development is presented as a process of action through which people increase their sense of wellbeing, justice and independence of nature and other social groups. The struggle of the oppressed for justice in political, economic and social relationships is seen as an important part of the development process. It is then argued that underdevelopment expresses a relationship based upon exploitation between two social groups in which one group develops at the expense of the other group. The problem of development in the Niger Delta is identified as one of underdevelopment: it results from the fact that external interests in collaboration with local forces have fostered and are sustaining a relationship based upon exploitation with the peoples of the Niger Delta. The nature and role of the Nigerian state in the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta is considered. Particular attention is paid to how the problems of legitimacy of the state, the neo-colonial character of the state, the collapse of governance institutions, the preferred methods of the primitive accumulation of capital and the assumptions of the state impact upon the underdevelopment process in the Niger Delta. The regulatory framework provided by the Nigerian state for oil and gas exploitation and the garrisoning agenda of the state are shown to be heavily implicated in this regard.

The discussion also examines the activities and assumptions of the transnational oil and gas companies in operating in the Niger Delta. Under the protective cover of the bayonets of the Nigerian state, the oil companies are involved in massive environmental and human rights abuses. Shell is the most guilty in this regard and has become notorious for its role in the violent suppression of Niger Delta communities. It is shown that the overall consequences of the nature and activities of the Nigerian state and its collaborating oil companies are underdevelopment, poverty, war and massive ecological damage in the Niger Delta. The development framework of the Nigerian state, its collaborating oil and gas companies and external western governments, agencies and institutions for addressing the underdevelopment problem in the Niger Delta is not only projects oriented but consciously seeks to deny the political character of the problem. In addition the framework seeks to deny any role in the development process for those organisations, groups and individuals in the Niger Delta who have at one or another seriously interrogated the role and methods of the Nigerian state and the oil companies in the Niger Delta.

The new language of this framework is empowerment through local community access to micro projects and micro-credits. It is argued that this framework has not and cannot address the core underdevelopment issues in the Niger Delta. It is suggested that a genuine framework for developing the Niger Delta can only come from an understanding and examination of the views and positions of the Niger Delta peoples themselves. These views suggest that the alternative framework for developing the Niger Delta must address the demands of the Niger Delta peoples for (i) true federalism, (ii) resource control, (iii) restoration of the environment and payment of the ecological debt, (iii) changes in the legislative framework, (iv) poverty

eradication, infrastructures and social services, (v) end to the wars in the Niger Delta. It is also argued that the demand for self-determination, which has been made by some groups in the Niger Delta, would lose its appeal and force if the above demands are addressed in a way that effectively dents the underdevelopment status of the Niger Delta.

We draw particular attention to the fact that any agenda of developing the Niger Delta, which ignores the political character of the problem and fails to right entrenched historical wrongs, will simply be scratching the problem on the surface. Such an approach, which is the one that is currently favoured by the Nigerian State, its collaborating transnational oil companies and western governments and institutions, has the real potential for increasing the anger of the Niger Delta peoples.

To push the envelope of development and persuade the Nigerian state to deliver on needed measures, it is also suggested that there is a need for a movement of Niger Delta peoples in the Niger Delta. Such a movement would lead the process of articulating development needs, reconcile conflicting community interests, provide the required legitimacy and credibility for the development process and its measures, ensure genuine community participation in the process and follow up on needed actions. The materials for creating such a movement are also identified.

PART I.

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BASE

1. Introduction

Every government in Nigeria since colonial times claims to have done something unique, specific or dramatic to 'develop' the Niger Delta. Yet, every generation, every community in the Niger Delta has been involved, on a continuing basis, in one form of protest or another to draw attention to the crisis of development and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. More specifically and to draw attention to the contradictions between claims and fact, Singh, Moffat and Linden (1995) reported that:

...despite its vast oil resources, the (Niger Delta) region remains poor. GNP per capita is below the national average of US\$280. Unemployment in Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State, is 30 percent and is believed to be equally high in the rural areas. The rural population commonly fish or practice subsistence agriculture, and supplement their diet and income with a wide variety of forest products. Education levels are below the national average and are particularly low for women. While 76% of Nigerian children attend primary school, this level drops to 30-40 percent in some parts of the Niger Delta. The poverty level in the Niger Delta is exacerbated by the high cost of living. In the urban areas of Rivers State, the cost of living index is the highest in Nigeria.

It is against the background of the contradiction between the claims of the Nigerian state and the actual experience of the people of the Niger Delta that, we believe, discussions of an integrated approach to the development of the Niger Delta need to be phrased and conducted. By an integrated approach, we mean a development strategy and process that takes into account and therefore addresses within a single framework, both the justifiable and or justiceable interests of the various groups of people in the situation and the multidimensional nature of the 'problem of development' in the Niger Delta. To be adequate, such discussions and hence development strategy must deal with the following issues among others:

- They must be based upon an adequate understanding of development that incorporates the experiences and circumstances of the Niger Delta.
- They must define and analyse the essence of the problem of development in the Niger Delta; in essence, they must address the question of whether the Niger Delta problem is a special case within the overall development problem in Nigeria and if it is (i) how and why it differs from the general problem of development in Nigeria; and (ii) the consequences of such differences for the resolution of the development problem in the Niger Delta.
- They must identify the nature and range of interests involved in the situation; the positions adopted by these interests and the degree to which the positions contribute either to the problem of development or its solution.
- They must examine the methods and means by and through which the problem of development in the Niger Delta has historically been addressed by the different interests in the situation. This examination must also evaluate the level of success achieved by the methods adopted by the interest groups and provide explanations for the degree to which the methods failed or succeeded.

- Finally, they must provide a framework for addressing the development problem in the Niger Delta against the background of the understanding of the outstanding problems; in effect, they must provide a new paradigm of development that resolves the problems that the old paradigm could not resolve.

This discussion is structured around the above issues and organised into fourteen sections. Chapter one is the introduction while chapter two takes a brief look at the geo-political space called the Niger Delta. In chapter three, we examine the essence of development and underdevelopment. We argue that development is a process of action through which people increase their sense of wellbeing under conditions of justice and circumstances of their own choosing. The struggle of the oppressed for justice in political, economic and social relationships is thus an important part of the development process. We also argue that underdevelopment expresses a relationship based upon exploitation between two social groups in which one group develops at the expense of the other group. In chapter four, we examine the development problem in the Niger Delta and conclude that it is a classic case of underdevelopment. The problem of development in the Niger Delta results from the fact that external interests in collaboration with local forces have fostered and are sustaining a relationship based upon exploitation with the peoples of the Niger Delta. Chapter five and six examine the nature and role of the Nigerian state in the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. Particular attention is paid to how the problems of legitimacy of the state, the neo-colonial character of the state, the collapse of governance institutions, the preferred methods of the primitive accumulation of capital and the assumptions of the state impact upon the underdevelopment process in the Niger Delta. The regulatory framework provided by the Nigerian state for oil and gas exploitation and the garrisoning agenda of the state are heavily implicated in this regard.

Chapter seven and eight then focus upon the transnational oil and gas companies in the Niger Delta and the consequences of their assumptions and activities for the Niger Delta. In chapter nine, we examine the reactions of the Niger Delta peoples to the underdevelopment activities of the Nigerian state and the oil and gas companies. Chapters ten and eleven then examine the development framework of the Nigerian state, its collaborating oil and gas companies and external western governments, agencies and institutions. It is argued that this framework, which consists of the establishment of special development agencies, providing micro projects and micro-credits in the Niger Delta have not and cannot address the core underdevelopment issues in the Niger Delta. It is suggested that a genuine framework for developing the Niger Delta can only come from an understanding and examination of the views and positions of the Niger Delta peoples themselves. These views are examined in chapter twelve. It is suggested that the alternative framework for developing the Niger Delta must address the demands of the Niger Delta peoples for (i) true federalism, (ii) resource control, (iii) restoration of the environment and payment of the ecological debt, (iii) changes in the legislative framework, (iv) poverty eradication, infrastructures and social services, (v) end to the wars in the Niger Delta. It is also argued that the demand for self-determination would become muted if the above demands are addressed in a way that effectively dents the underdevelopment status of the Niger Delta.

To push the envelope of development and persuade the Nigerian state to deliver on needed measures, it is suggested in chapter thirteen that there is a need for a

movement of Niger Delta peoples in the Niger Delta. Such a movement would lead the process of articulating development needs, reconcile conflicting community interests, provide the required legitimacy and credibility for the process and its measures, ensure genuine community participation and follow up on needed actions. The materials for creating such a movement are also identified. In the final chapter fourteen we draw particular attention to the fact that any agenda of developing the Niger Delta, which ignores the political character of the problem and fails to right entrenched historical wrongs, will simply be scratching the problem on the surface and with the real potential for increased irritation that this could entail on the part of the Niger Delta peoples.

2. The Geo-political Space called the Niger Delta

Arising from the critical space that the Niger Delta currently occupies in Nigeria's political economy and history, a large number of discussions have examined the natural and human ecology of the area. With an area of over 20,000 square kilometres, the Niger Delta is described as, "the largest wetland in Africa and among the three largest in the world" (CLO, 2002:9). The Niger Delta is thus a difficult terrain. However, the ecosystem of the area is acknowledged as one of the most diverse and richest in the world and therefore highly supportive of human life. The records indicate that indeed, human life has thrived in these wetlands for more than 7000 years. The inhabitants of the area, now separated into a number of states, are the Ijaws (who are the largest group and number about 8 million) Ndoni, Degema, Egbema, Ogba, Ekpeye, Itsekiri, Urobo, Edo, Efik, Okpo, Growhia, Ibibio and others. The Ilaje and Ikale of Ondo, the Ohaji and Oguta of Imo State and the Asa of Abia State constitute the western and eastern Delta.

The large number of different ethnic and nationality groups in the Niger Delta suggests that conflicts are bound to arise and have arisen between them over the period. In the past, and especially before 1960, these conflicts arose over competition for power and influence between the groups, as well as over trade and economic relations with outsiders. These conflicts were however neither endemic nor continuous; the different groups experienced long periods of relative collaborative relationships and peaceful coexistence. The character of these conflicts and the relationships within and between the different ethnic and nationality groups changed dramatically with the intensification of oil and gas expropriation, exploitation and appropriation activities by the Nigerian state and the transnational oil and gas companies from around 1975 onwards. As the elder Saro-Wiwa, father of the murdered Ken Saro-Wiwa (2002:viii) has succinctly pointed out, the various communities: ...were living in peace before Shell came. We were sharing our forest with animals and monkeys but when Shell came, they started setting one community against the other. They started with Andoni and Ogoni and before you knew it, they had started killing our people.

Shell has become not only a metaphor for the killings in the Niger Delta; it has also become symbolic of the rapacious exploitation of a people and their heritage, of the mentality of the slave trader who justifies his odious trade through recourse to the argument that his practice fits with the laws of nature. As we shall see, the development problem in the Niger Delta is inexorably bound up with Shell and its relationship with the Nigerian state. Thus unbundling the problem of

underdevelopment in the area will also require releasing the stranglehold that Shell has over the Niger Delta in particular and the Nigerian state in general.

3. Essence of Development and Underdevelopment

Many observers have noted that there is no consensus about the meaning of development. Rather what obtain are different schools or approaches to the definition of what development means (Little, 1982, Biersteker, 1987; Omoweh 2000). Indeed, Biersteker (1987) identifies six different approaches to the conceptualisation of development: the conservative neo-classical realists, the liberal internationalists, the structuralists, the vulgar *dependentistas*, the sophisticated *dependentistas* and the classical neo-Marxists. In fact, Jhingan (1999) identifies more than twenty approaches. These range from the earliest theories of Adam Smith through those of Keynes and Rostow to the dualistic theories of Boeke and the circular causation theories of Myrdal. To these must be added the refashioning of several of these theories by the paid theorists of the Bretton Woods Institutions into the current liberal ideologies of development. Given the multiplicity of perspectives, Little (1982:6) is quite pessimistic about the possibility of establishing an objective definition of development. As he put it, “there can be no objective definition of development and therefore, no universally acceptable indicator (of development). The best one might hope for would be to get some rough consensus on objectives and hence on how progress toward these objectives can be measured. But I very much doubt whether this can be achieved.”

While we share Little’s appreciation of the difficulties involved, we do not share his pessimism about the possibility of developing an objective definition of development. We believe that the problem can be solved. What we need to do is to recognise that what is regarded as objective depends upon the concrete historical experiences and hence values of individuals as members of society. As Dos Santos (1978:61) has noted in the case of attempts to define a rational economic or political system, “Rationality is defined by men, and men exist in history, in concrete societies and social groups. In other words, the rationality of an economic or political measure can be only defined on the basis of an understanding of the social system in which it is taken.”

The importance of this statement is to draw attention to the fact that the meaning of such terms as development and underdevelopment is usually established from the standpoint of specific social groups. Thus, what is important is the degree to which the meaning invested in a concept correctly captures and enables us to interpret historical experience from the standpoint of the members of a social group who have an interest in the area of life to which the concept relates. In discussing the difference or whether any difference exists between the concepts of development economics and economic growth for example, writers have usually pointed out that while development economics addresses the problems of underdeveloped countries, economic growth on the other hand refers to the experience of the industrialised developed countries (Jhingan, 1999; Ake, 2001). This means that the structuralist, neo-classical, liberal or dependency and, indeed, any other approach to the conceptualisation of development would have validity only from the standpoint of a particular social group to the extent to which it both represented and validated the experience of the social group.

Therefore, the approach to the establishment of the meaning of such concepts and notions as development should start, in the first place with the identification of the social group from whose vantage point the notion in question is being examined. Arguments would then no longer proceed on the basis of whether or not the identified measure and its background meaning were objective but on the degree to which across social groups (and even within social groups) it explained more of the facts and experiences that they sought to capture. The more it captured such experiences (from the vantage point of the social group in question), the more objective the meaning given to the concept would become.

In this regard, it is possible to identify distinct social groups and the corresponding version of development that most faithfully represents their experience of development. In the Nigerian situation, the main social groups are the working people (workers, farmers, artisans, small traders, etc) on the one hand and the exploiter class (capitalists, the top echelons of the state bureaucracy, the remnants of the feudal class, the transnational representatives of global imperialism, etc) on the other hand. These two social groups, which constitute Nigeria's subordinate and ruling classes, have extensions beyond the Nigerian nation state. Theories of development both within and outside Nigeria are developed from the standpoint of each of these classes.

In this discussion, the meaning of development is pursued from the point of view of the subordinate classes. In the case of the Niger Delta, these would be the workers, fishermen, farmers and related groups. From this point of view, there are two levels at which development needs to be understood: the general and the particular. The general level examines development from the point of view of the entire movement of human history, while the particular level seeks to establish the essence of development within the context of specific socio-economic formations. At the general level, development can be understood as the succession of a lower social formation by a higher social formation. Examples of this sort of development are the succession of feudalism by capitalism and of capitalism by socialism. In any context therefore, development occurs when a more exploitative social order (for example, the feudalist social order) is replaced by a less exploitative social order (e.g., the capitalist social order) or when an exploitative social order (for example, the capitalist social order) is replaced by a non-exploitative social order (e.g., the capitalist social order). The particular conception of development considers development within as opposed to between social formations. Walter Rodney's (1972:10-11) definition of development belongs here. As he put it, "development implies an increasing capacity (of a social group) to regulate both internal and external relationship... Every people have shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting their resources..."

Development also implies a process. Omoweh (2000:35) has noted, for example, that development, "is a process of structural change and accumulation of capital... that enables society, this time, the national economy and the people to reproduce themselves, sustain their basic needs while ensuring an overall increasing socio-cultural, political and economic equality." Cockcroft, Frank and Johnson (1972:xvi) have also insisted that development, "involves a structural transformation of the economy, society, polity and culture of the satellite that permits the self-generating and self-perpetuating use and development of the people's potential. Development comes about as a consequence of a frontal attack on the oppression, exploitation, and

poverty that they suffer at the hands of the dominant classes and their system.” Development therefore has to be understood as a process of ongoing and emergent action that provides, “a frontal attack on the oppression, exploitation, and poverty that (the subordinate groups) suffer at the hands of the dominant classes and their system,” has particular relevance. It goes beyond change in economic indices as measured by gross national product, GNP per capita, welfare and social indicators. It includes actions that may have political, social and cultural dimensions and through which change in indices is produced. Development then is then a process of action by which a social group increases:

- its capacity to regulate relationships among its members and with outsiders;
- its independence of both nature and other social groups;
- its ability to provide for the material, social and psychological needs of members of the social group;
- the level of the socio-cultural, political and economic equality among its members; and
- the conditions of justice and freedom for its members in relation to members of other social groups through actions that target oppression, exploitation and poverty.

These five indicators of development are predicated upon a central, determining principle: namely that development is a process of action through which people increase their sense of well being under conditions of justice and circumstances of their own choosing. Development, as action and struggle, should increase the sense of justice, autonomy and well being among the members of a social group. It should reduce the level of injustice existing among and between members of a social group. In effect, this means (i) that the struggle of the oppressed must be seen in positive terms because it is part and parcel of the process of development and (ii) that more individuals experience a sense of well-being, justice and free but informed choice in the conditions of their lives and in the relationships with each other and members of other social groups the more developed society a society will be.

Underdevelopment can be seen as a process that seeks to reverse or stall the process of development. It expresses a particular relationship between two social groups in which one group can be said to be developing at the expense of the other. This means that one group acts to prevent another group from taking action to develop itself and that it also extracts a surplus from the other group that it then uses for its own development, thus reducing the capacity of the other group to develop. Again, to quote Walter Rodney (1972:21-22):

...Modern underdevelopment expresses a particular relationship of exploitation: namely, the exploitation of one country by another. All of the countries named as ‘underdeveloped’ in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is now pre-occupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. African and Asian societies were developing independency until they were taken over directly or indirectly by the capitalist powers. When that happened, exploitation increased and the export of surplus ensured, depriving the societies of the benefit of their natural resources and labour.

One major criticism of the underdevelopment thesis is the tendency to blame both the relationship and its consequences on the over-determining influence of outsiders. The implication of this to draw attention to major areas of autonomy enjoyed by the

ruling elites in underdeveloped societies (for example, the ruling elite in Nigeria and in the Niger Delta) to alter relations of dependence and exploitation in favour of the peoples in the underdeveloped societies. Historical and contemporary evidence shows that, more often than not, the ruling elites in underdeveloped societies (for example, in Nigeria and in the Niger Delta) chose consciously to enter into an alliance with foreign capital and exercise their autonomy against the interests of their people. In the case of Nigeria, this qualification means that the process of underdevelopment is accomplished at several levels: first at the level of the relationship between imperialism and the Nigerian people (with the Nigerian state included) and second at the level of the relationship between the Nigerian ruling class (using the instrument of the Nigerian state) and the various subordinated groups in Nigeria. The underdeveloped status of Nigeria is thus not the sole doing of colonialists and neo-colonialists led by British and American imperialist capital; indeed, it reflects as much the conscious choices made by members of Nigeria's ruling class as it does the decisions of international capital. The demarcation between the two levels of underdevelopment not only indicates that Nigeria's ruling class is a conscious and willing partner of foreign capital in the underdevelopment of Nigeria and its people; more importantly, it points to major problems that can be expected in any agenda of development that may be fashioned by the Nigerian state for the Niger Delta.

PART II.

THE NIGER DELTA AND ITS NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

4. The Development Problem in the Niger Delta

Two crucial questions that need to be answered here are: is there a special problem of development in the Niger Delta that differentiates it from the general problem of development and underdevelopment in Nigeria? If there is, what is the nature of this problem of development? These questions are important for at least four reasons. The first is the fact that the particular problem of development in the Niger Delta cannot be separated from the general problem of development in Nigeria. Nigeria is made up of at least 250 different ethnic groups, which can be further regrouped into a dozen or more major nationalities. It is a matter of fact that some communities in other parts of Nigeria are less developed than some areas in the Niger Delta. It may well then be argued that the development needs of these communities deserve as much, if not indeed more attention, than those of the communities in the Niger Delta. To argue for an integrated approach to the development of the Niger Delta, it is necessary to show why the Niger Delta deserves the priority and urgent attention, which the nature of the envisaged integrated development intervention implies.

Following from the above, the second reason is that the answers to the questions should not only justify the special efforts that may need to be made but also set them apart from those that are being made to address the problem of development and underdevelopment in Nigeria. The third reason is that the answers to the questions should also help in the determination of the strategy and hence process of development that is fashioned for the area. Such a development strategy and process must focus upon and address in a direct manner the special issues raised by the nature of the development problem in the area. Finally, and not the least important, the fourth reason is that the answers should also serve as a lesson for the future. They should help us determine not only which other situations in Nigeria fit into the Niger Delta case but perhaps more importantly, what class of actions needs to be taken to prevent the occurrence of such special cases in the first place.

In relation to the first question, it is worth noting that over the years, many interest groups in and outside of Nigeria have advocated that the Niger Delta be treated as a special case in terms of defining and addressing its development needs. This means that, in general, there is agreement that the Niger Delta has a special problem of development whose solution requires a unique approach. However, the reasons advocated for the need to grant this special status to the Niger Delta have varied. One class of reasons believes that the development needs of the Niger Delta deserve to be treated differently from those of the rest of the country because although it is host to the natural resources (oil and gas) that provide over ninety percent of the foreign earnings of the country, the Niger Delta communities are among the poorest in the country. Other arguments have cited the nature of the terrain: it is argued that the terrain is difficult and therefore requires special attention if the people of the area are to participate actively in the ongoing historical experience of the country.

There is no doubt that these arguments do have some merit. But there is a need to insist that what separates the Niger Delta development problem from the general problem of development and underdevelopment in Nigeria is not geography (there are parts of Nigeria that have even more difficult natural terrains than some areas in the Niger Delta); neither is it the fact that it is host to Nigeria's most valued and priced natural resources (after all, there are also other parts of the country that are hosts to valuable mineral resources). Finally, it is not because the communities of the Niger Delta are abjectly poor in spite of their oil and gas resources (there are communities in Nigeria, such as in Plateau that are abjectly poor in spite of the mineral deposits there).

In our view, two conditions differentiate the Niger Delta development problem from the general problem of development in Nigeria. The first is the specific manner in which the rich deposits of oil and gas in the area have been and are being exploited by a consortium of interests made up of the Nigerian state, international capital and local indigenous elites. The second condition is the set of consequences produced by the specific methods through which the oil and gas resources of the area have been and are being exploited and expropriated. In effect, the problem in the Niger Delta is one of underdevelopment. As we have seen, underdevelopment expresses a relationship based upon exploitation between two social groups in which one group develops at the expense of the other group. In the Niger Delta, external interests in collaboration with local forces have fostered and sustained a relationship based upon exploitation with the peoples of the Niger Delta. Any discussion of a framework for the development of the Niger Delta, which does not acknowledge and therefore proceed from these facts cannot address, in any meaningful sense, the special problem of development in the Niger Delta.

5. The Nigerian State and the Niger Delta

Many observers have concluded that the Nigerian state is an active agent in the underdevelopment of Nigeria in general and of the Niger Delta in particular. It has been observed that rather than facilitate the process for the development of Nigeria, the state participates in the underdevelopment of the nation. This paradox lies at the heart of the paradox of the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. To understand both sets of paradoxes, and how they impact upon the solution to the problem of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta, it is necessary to look at a number of features of the Nigerian state. The more relevant features are (i) the problem of the paradox of legitimacy of the Nigerian state; (ii) the neo-colonial dependent nature of the state; (iii) the weak nature and even absence of important governance state institutions; (iv) the problem of legitimacy of the state; (v) the methods sanctioned by the state for the primitive accumulation of capital; and (vi) the assumptions of the state of the about its role and status in relation to the Nigerian people and international capital. These features of the Nigerian state are not only closely linked; they also help to explain why and how transnational oil and gas companies have been able to reproduce the rules of production and accumulation under the slave trade or in America's 'wild, wild West' in the present period in Nigeria.

5.1. The Neo-Colonial, Dependent Nature of the Nigerian State

One major problem of the Nigerian state is that it has had major difficulties reconciling the different sections of the ruling class around a common set of priorities. Ihonvbere (2000:76) has observed, for example, that the Nigerian state, “has never been able to build an appreciable degree of confidence among Nigerians, ensure some discipline within the ranks of the elite, manage the economy in the interest of the people, or construct the much needed platforms of inclusion, tolerance and participation. Also, the state has been captured and privatised by a tiny fraction of the elite that uses public institutions to terrorise non-bourgeois communities, abuse human rights, loot public funds, and mortgage the future of the country.”

The roots of the modern Nigerian state were planted in the colonial state, which related to the indigenous peoples as natives, subjects and a conquered people to be civilised. Civilising the natives meant of course exploiting them and treating them with disdain, disgust and distrust; in short, as inferiors. Resource exploitation activities were conducted on the basis that the resources belonged to the colonial power and that, in any case left with or to the natives, they would not be able to use such resources for productive purposes. The managers of the modern Nigerian state not only inherited and internalised these attitudes; over time, they deepened and expanded them.

Etteng (1998:7) has indeed noted that the action and the theories in use of the Nigerian State must be understood against the background of its absolute lack of autonomy in relation to interests of foreign capital: “A unique and fundamental structural feature of the post-colonial Nigerian state which constantly renders political legitimacy extremely precarious, is the non-autonomisation of its class domination. This feature is most pronounced especially in regard to the relation of the state to local and foreign capital and its other dominant constitutive social forces. This characteristic non-autonomisation is largely a reflection of the dependent, peripheral and externally oriented nature of the country’s social formation and the state itself. In the circumstances, the Nigerian State is thus impelled to conform, more or less to the logic and imperatives of foreign monopoly capital and its representative institutions and agencies.”

In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Rodney (1972) documents the details of the lopsided relationship between the European powers and African states and how this relationship was used to create the ‘poverty of development’ in Africa. From the period of the slave trade to the neo-colonial period, the European powers consistently exploited African peoples and their resources for the development of their own countries. The rulers of African states played a subsidiary role in the process, a role which varied with each historical period. Supported by the armed forces of their home states, the leading role in the process of exploitation was assumed by individual capitalists, whether as slave traders, merchants, money lenders or manufacturers. This relationship not only continues to this day; it has intensified. There is a major difference however. This difference is that the visible role of European states and later, the US government has now been assumed by a few multilateral institutions that function even more effectively in serving the interests of the advanced capitalist countries. Thus economic and political policies are designed and imposed on African countries for the express purpose of retaining and deepening the exploitative and lopsided relationships from the past.

It is crucial to emphasise that the collusion of the Nigerian state with foreign capital in the underdevelopment of Nigeria is not one-sided; that is, it is not contrived on the basis of the compulsion of the Nigerian state by foreign capital. Like the traditional rulers who collaborated with the slave traders in the triangular trade in slaves, the managers of the Nigerian state do enjoy a large measure of independence and autonomy in their relationship and interactions with foreign capital. How they choose to exercise this independence and autonomy is however quite another matter and depends upon such factors as which wing of the ruling class is in control of the state apparatus, how the emergent issues in the economy and polity are prioritised by members of the dominant coalition in power, the relative balance of power between the various wings of the ruling class and the patriotic oppositional forces in society, the methods preferred by members of the ruling class for the primitive accumulation of capital, and the degree to which members of the ruling class have internalised a conception of their role as one of functioning in a servant status in relation to a *master* foreign capital.

It is these dynamics that produced at different periods in Nigerian history the different and quite often conflicting (but not necessarily contradictory) strategies of development in the form of state planning, Nigerianisation, indigenisation, commercialisation, limited privatisation and full scale liberalisation of the economy. It can be seen that while Nigerianisation, indigenisation, state ownership of key sectors of the economy and national economic planning necessarily limited the freedom of foreign capital in the maximum extraction of surplus at one period, the complete deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation of the economy totally expanded the power, freedom and initiative of foreign capital to extract maximum surplus and control the economy at another period. This is the essence of the point made by Brewer (1980: 293) when he cautions that: “We must recognize that opposition to the dominance of the major imperial powers is not necessarily genuine anti-imperialism, and may represent no more than a desire by a newly formed bourgeoisie to establish itself within a world system that it does not wish to change...”

In earlier works, (Iyayi, 1986; 1989) we have argued that the swing of the pendulum in whatever direction was largely moderated by the efforts of the competing members of Nigeria’s indigenous ruling class to transform itself from a mere political class into a substantive economic class through the instrumentality of the primitive accumulation of capital. This is why, for most of the period, as Leys (1978:21) has observed: “The essential function of the state was to displace monopolies enjoyed by foreign capital and substitute monopolies for African capital, and also to supplement individual African capital with state finance capital and state-secured technology, to enable them to occupy the space created for them in the newly accessible sectors.” The problem with the underdevelopment process in Nigeria is that the more the local ruling class elements attempted to, “occupy the space created for them in the newly accessible sectors,” the greater they also came to rely on the power of the state. At the same time, the non-autonomisation of the state ensured, as Etteng has argued, that the Nigerian state came to depend more and more on foreign economic and political interests for its survival.

These factors are responsible for the fact that the Nigerian state is today a hostage of the World Bank and IMF. Evidence for this can be found in the fact that the IMF and the World Bank are in control of the Nigerian economy, that foreign powers decide

who can or will be president of Nigeria, that the US government and its intelligence agencies are now in control of Nigeria's armed forces. To appreciate the seriousness of this point, it is important to draw attention to the results of the investigation reported in the February (2001:6) edition of the CRYSTAL Magazine:

Nigerians like to boast that their country has the biggest and strongest army in Africa. But today, there is a feeling in informed circles that this army may have suffered a defeat without going to war. Even top serving Nigerian generals are getting to grips with this idea. The government of President Olusegun Obasanjo has entered a military pact with the United States of America. Code-named Operation Focus Relief, the agreement grants concessions to the United States Army to engage in activities that no foreign army has undertaken in Nigeria since the country became independent in 1960... Information made available to CRYSTAL magazine by the United States Embassy in Abuja describes Operation Focus Relief as 'a historic and unprecedented bilateral agreement between the US and Nigeria. CRYSTAL gathered that the American soldiers currently stationed at NICON Hilton and Sheraton Hotels are also engaged in espionage activities on Nigeria's military capabilities.

The handover of Nigeria's military institutions to the USA without the input of Nigeria's parliament and civil society is indeed unprecedented when viewed against (i) the massive protests in 1963 to the proposed Anglo-Nigeria Defence Pact under the Balewa government; (ii) the murderous Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) which Nigerians fought with imported arms and political support but which did not produce any defence pact with any foreign power.

Several scholars (Olorode, 2000; Omoweh, 2000; Iyayi, 2003; Etteng, 2000; Toyo, 2001; Ozo-Eson, 2000) have noted, in particular, the role of the World Bank and IMF in particular in the takeover of Nigeria as part of the Third World. Babai (1993:447) has noted for example, that although the IMF was created with the intention of making it a lender of last resort to needy countries whether rich or poor and to supervise the global rules relating to money:

... the world for which the IMF was created has long ceased to exist, and the IMF has found itself thrust into (other) roles. Its primary function has become to minister prescriptions to financially beleaguered economies in the Third World. In the process, it has acquired immense influence over the economic destinies of many countries. It has also acquired a reputation as an unrelenting disciplinarian whose programmes and policies produce economic austerity, social unrest and political instability. In its proclivity for becoming enmeshed in controversy, the IMF is without peer among international organizations. According to one claim, the IMF has overthrown more governments than Marx and Lenin combined...

The IMF is under the firm control of the US. Thus the IMF structure and policies have changed as the US has deemed fit over the years. Again, as Babai (1993:448) has observed:

... the stratification of power among states has been a constant, although rankings of power have changed: the IMF remains the preserve of the powerful and the affluent. The most notable changes have consisted of reshuffles within an existing hierarchy – specifically the group of 5 (the United States, Germany, Japan, France and Britain) – rather than the installation of a new hierarchy. Even in the formal attributes of power, the United States continues to command a preponderance. Thus while its voting share has declined from one-third to one-fifth, the United States still has more than enough votes to prevent a change in the structure of the organization, or in the distribution of quotas, two decisions that require a majority of eighty-five percent... the staff (of the IMF) is headed by a Managing Director who as part of a convention that balances the consignment of the presidency of the World Bank as an American fiefdom, is a European national. There has

been one exception to the exclusivity of the North in the inner circle: Saudi Arabia. It has been co-opted by virtue of becoming the IMF's foremost supplier of borrowed resources, which, after paid-in subscriptions are the primary source of the institution's liquid assets...

While the IMF and the World Bank impose structural adjustment programmes and other macro-economic frameworks on Third World countries, the benefits of adjustment are reaped by transnational corporations that have their headquarters in the advanced capitalist countries. The result is the continuing underdevelopment of countries of the Third World. Given the fact that underdevelopment translates into weaker state structures, weaker economies and generalised poverty, the grounds are further prepared for greater control by international capital over the affairs of the country. This accounts for the fact that as we have noted elsewhere (Iyayi, 2002:)

...Production activities in Nigeria are oriented not towards meeting the needs of Nigerians but towards meeting the needs of imperialist circles, located usually in Europe, the USA, Canada and Japan. Dependence means that even if Nigerian rulers were willing to experiment with new forms of relationship, imperialist circles represented by the multinational companies would make every effort to frustrate any initiatives in that direction. The tragedy of the Nigerian situation, however, is that Nigerian rulers, over the years, have themselves been in the forefront of championing the case for maintaining the neo-colonial, dependent capitalist status of the Nigerian economy and society. The capitalist status of the country is also part of the Nigerian problem. As Eskor Toyo (2001) had noted, capitalism is a system of production relations that is based upon and driven by greed, this greed is legitimised in the rules and regulations that capitalist lawmakers impose upon society. These rules legitimize the right of the strong to exploit the weak, the enlightened to dominate the ignorant, and the advanced countries to dominate and exploit the underdeveloped parts of the world. The rules legitimate the rights of Shell, Chevron, Julius Berger, SAIPEM, and all the other multinationals to make profits at any cost in the Niger Delta and in the other parts of Nigeria. It is clear then that unless there is a fundamental change in the neo-colonial, dependent capitalist status of Nigeria, the problem, of the Niger Delta will smolder on...

5.2. The Nigerian State and the Problem of the Paradox of Legitimacy

The fact that the Nigerian state serves the interests of external neo-liberal imperialist institutions and that it, "has never been able to build an appreciable degree of confidence among Nigerians," has come to be reflected in a major problem: the *paradox of legitimacy*. The paradox of legitimacy is defined by the fact that while the Nigerian state has been constituted and managed without the consent of the Nigerian people, the wielders of the state and of state power also recognise that they need that very consent for the stability and hence viability of the state. Over time, the members of the indigenous ruling class have attempted to manage this paradox by manufacturing consent through the massive repression of subordinated social groups, monumental electoral frauds, suspension of the constitution, coup d'états, bribery of the opposition and outright propaganda. Rather than loosen the paradox, these methods have however, tightened it, leading the state to become weak, fragile and dependent upon external sources of support for survival. Multinational oil companies, the global capitalist institutions of the IMF and World Bank and the governments and security agencies of leading capitalist countries provide the needed support to the Nigerian state and thus continue to ensure its survival. The politics of oil in the Niger Delta is an integral part of the politics of the survival of a weak and fractured Nigerian state that is dependent upon external sources of support for legitimacy and survival.

5.3. The Nigerian State, Governance and Governance Institutions

There is widespread agreement that the development problem in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular arises from the nature of governance (Joseph 2003; Fayemi, Jaye and Yeebo, 2003; Ihonvbere, 2000). The major institutions of governance in Nigeria are the government, the judiciary, the legislature, the forces of coercion or law enforcement, and the bureaucracy. The most prominent of these institutions are the law enforcement agencies and the government. In Nigeria today, the effectiveness of the institutions of law enforcement has diminished. The military institution has been so politicised that its primary role has been diverted to political assassinations, coup plotting and the struggle for power. The police institutions cannot prevent, let alone investigate serious crimes. The erosion of these institutions explains the emergence of self-help security organisations: the OPC, Bakassi and the Arewa security organisations. Local communities have had to establish their own vigilante organisations. These and other developments are indicative of the failure of the institutions charged with providing security for and preventing crime among the people.

The institution of government in Nigeria has also failed. The fact that the defence pact with a foreign power was contemplated and concluded by the executive arm of government alone without the input of the other arms of government and the Nigerian people speaks directly to the privatisation of power by a tiny section of the ruling class and the weakness of the institutions of governance.

The weakness of the institutions of governance also means that individual or sectional group interests tend to override considerations for the common good; in essence powerful individuals or sectional groups deploy or neutralise such institutions in the service of their own ends. Nigeria's political history, especially its recent political history, has shown for example that even in a situation of civil democratic politics, the decisions of the head of state can override the power of parliament even in legislative matters. It has equally shown that the judiciary becomes either an active accomplice or totally helpless when powerful actors have claims that they wish to press against the claims of the rest of society.

The collapse of governance institutions leads to reliance on self-help (OPC, Bakassi, and Arewa organisations are examples) and to a situation where the least powerful groups in society suffer the most. In a multi-ethnic and multi-nationality setting like Nigeria, it means also that the weakest nationality groups, such as those in the Niger Delta tend to suffer the most from the collapse of governance institutions. The collapse of governance institutions has serious implications for development. As Joseph (2003: 14) has remarked, "how can a revolution in African governance be effected that would build complexes of institutions, from local to national levels that operate synergistically? No country can undergo sustainable development unless it arrives at its own answer to (this question)."

5.4. The Nigerian State and the Methods of Primitive Accumulation

Corruption has been held to be responsible for most of the development problems in Nigeria. Former US Ambassador to Nigeria, Lyman (2002) has observed that, "Nigeria reels from one of the worst economic declines in the world ... corruption has

robbed the country blind.” Over the years Transparency International has also consistently ranked Nigeria the first or second most corruption country in the world.

There are different explanations for the proclivity of members of Nigeria’s ruling class for corruption. Andreski (1968) has argued that African rulers have a natural strong desire born to steal. As he put it even then, “the newly independent African states provide some of the closest approximations to pure kleptocracy that have been recorded. The use of public funds for private enrichment is the normal and accepted practice in African states and the exceptions are few and inconclusive.” Andreski has been rightly attacked not because his pinpointing of corruption as the bane of governance in African nations is wrong but because he then proceeds, from a decidedly racist point of view, to locate the cause of corruption in the psychology of the African.

In an earlier work, we have argued that the phenomenon of corruption while not being specifically African nevertheless represents the most important means adopted by an emergent ruling African political class for the primitive accumulation of capital. The logic of the primitive accumulation of capital is immanent in capitalist production relations; however, in the context of underdeveloped capitalist societies, it assumes a special character. This special character derives from the fact that in these societies during the colonial period, the coloniser exercised both political and economic power. The attainment of independence in these contexts occurs against a background in which the coloniser cedes formal political power to the colonised while retaining absolute control over the economic means necessary for members of the emergent ruling class of the colonised to actualise themselves not only as the ruling political class but also as the ruling economic class in the situation.

Efforts by the emergent class of indigenous capitalists to redress the problem through productive activity fail because of the regime of standards established by the coloniser and which members of the emergent ruling class cannot meet. In the Nigerian situation, the methods adopted in the early period (1960-1985) included Nigerianisation, indigenisation, and commercialisation. From around 1985 onwards, the methods came to include privatisation. All these methods failed, however, because they were premised on an initial practice and hence status which required that members of the emergent ruling class have at their disposal the collateral needed to obtain loans to enable them compete with outsiders for control over the most lucrative sectors of the economy. This problem, which we have described as that of the proletarianisation of the emergent ruling class (Iyayi, 1983), increasingly alienated members of the emergent indigenous ruling political class from control of the economy. Increasingly, it became one whose resolution was seen as the defining process for the emergence of an indigenous ruling class in the true sense of the world in the Nigerian situation.

To resolve this dilemma, the emergent ruling class increasingly turned to public office as the most important source ‘for private enrichment’; in other words, to corruption. Hence, over the period, corruption became and has remained the principal method for the primitive accumulation of capital in the Nigerian neo-colony. Since holding public office also became the most important and generous source of private enrichment, the contest for state power and hence occupation of public office became a matter of life and death for members of the emergent ruling class. The fractious nature of the ruling class occasioned by divisions along ethnic, religious and other

lines merely added to the fierceness of the contest for state power. Under these circumstances, neither the institutions nor the values of governance could be established.

This explanation for corruption and its significance in the development of the ruling class has special significance for understanding the situation in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta provides over 90% of the funds for government business and hence for the primitive accumulation of capital. For this reason, the Niger Delta is of strategic importance to members of Nigeria's emergent ruling class. Darah (2001) has observed, for example that:

The South-South zone covered in this Report, unlike other zones of the federation, has this contradictory peculiarity. The Niger Delta, which is the homeland of the peoples now so politically constituted into 6 states of the South-South is the economic life support of the Nigerian federation. The nation depends maximally on its oil and gas despite the annual ritual budgetary pronouncements of intent, by various ruling regimes, to diversify the national economy. Given the mono-cultural character of the economy of the nation, the South-South bears the brunt of being the goose that must lay the golden eggs... Attempts by the peoples of the area to protest their marginalisation in the power matrix and political economy of Nigeria have been repressed by the combined monstrous might of the state, multinational corporations and the ruling classes. In this respect the tales from Jesse, Odi, Kaiama, Umuechem and Ogoni land are still fresh in our minds. Indeed, judging from the impunity with which a succession of ruling regimes in our recent history, have misappropriated the oil and gas wealth, it would appear that the strident official state advocacy of national unity is merely an expedient ploy to ensure that there is a centralized, united treasury to loot. When corrupt regimes without any development agenda, nonetheless, proclaim Nigeria to be "our great nation", and the multinationals concur with such conceit, it is their appetite for the vast natural wealth of the Niger Delta that fuels such flattery.

The development problem of the Niger Delta is thus inexorably linked, first with the fact that it accounts for over 90% of the revenues accruing to the Nigerian state, and second with the fact that stealing public funds is the favoured method for the primitive accumulation of capital by members of Nigeria's indigenous ruling class. Indeed, we can state that the greater the contribution of a region to the national revenue in a context where private wealth comes from the private expropriation of public funds, the more will be the tendency of the ruling class to under-develop the region. The Niger Delta region in Nigeria is a veritable proof of this hypothesis. It is also clear that unless practice shifts from corruption to productive activity as the basis of the primitive accumulation of capital for members of Nigerian indigenous ruling class, the problem of the development of Nigeria in general and of the Niger Delta area will remain unresolved.

5.5. The Assumptions of the Nigerian State

One key feature of the Nigerian state and which helps to explain its relationships and interaction with the Nigerian people and international capital is the set of values, assumptions or ideology that it upholds. Like the glass-ceiling phenomenon, this ideology is insidious, pervasive and extremely powerful, helping in the process to justify, legitimise and suggest directions, strategies, policies and actions. The roots of the ideology are to be found in the other features of the Nigerian state: its neo-colonial, dependent, and non-autonomised status. They are also located in the features and characteristics of members of the dominant coalition in particular and of the ruling class in general: the members of the class do not have a sense of history;

they are not creative; they are lazy, dependent, hedonistic and pleasure seeking, crude, authoritarian, opportunistic and even masochistic. Thus the ideology of the Nigerian state has the following elements:

- That the problem of development of the Nigerian nation state is coterminous with the transformation of the indigenous ruling political class into an indigenous ruling economic class and hence into an indigenous ruling (economic and political) class in the true sense of the word;
- That control of the Nigerian state by members of the indigenous ruling class is the only vehicle for achieving the required transformation;
- That the Nigerian state not only stands above the Nigerian people but also that it has the right, in fact, the duty to expropriate whatever resources exist in any part of Nigeria considered necessary for the development of Nigeria; or, in effect the development of the indigenous ruling class.
- That the issues of legitimacy, democracy and human rights are luxury items in the envelop of development in Nigeria. More specifically, that legitimacy depends upon the demonstrated capacity of the dominant sections of the indigenous ruling class to manage dissent and outmanoeuvre opponents and the people rather than upon the consent of the people; democracy depends upon the degree to which the development problem has been solved rather than as a necessary component of the process of acquiring and sustaining legitimacy; and human rights depend upon the benevolence of rulers rather than as natural, inalienable and immutable rights of individuals as men and women;
- That the Nigerian indigenous ruling class, the Nigerian state, and the Nigerian people are inferior to and must always assume a subordinate role in relation to the ruling classes, states and peoples of the advanced imperialist countries;
- That the Nigerian indigenous ruling class, the Nigerian state, and the Nigerian people cannot develop Nigeria; only the ruling classes, states, peoples and agencies of the advanced imperialist countries can. As a consequence, the Nigerian indigenous ruling class, the Nigerian state, and the Nigerian people must always be in partnership, albeit as inferiors and subordinates with the ruling classes, states, peoples and agencies of the advanced imperialist countries in their efforts to develop Nigeria;
- That nothing must be done by the Nigerian indigenous ruling class, the Nigerian state, and the Nigerian people to oppose, contradict, criticise or fight against the development strategies, efforts, ideas and processes advanced by the ruling classes, states, peoples and agencies of the advanced imperialist countries to develop Nigeria;
- That the Nigerian indigenous ruling class and the Nigerian state have a responsibility to provide 'an enabling environment' by whatever means, (including the use of force, repression and abrogation of the rights of the Nigerian people) for the implementation of the development strategies advanced by the ruling classes, states, peoples and agencies of the advanced imperialist countries;
- That whatever is done in the country (including the dumping of toxic waste) by the ruling classes, states, peoples and agencies of the advanced imperialist countries amount to efforts to develop Nigeria.

These assumptions drive the policies and actions of the Nigerian state in relation to the Nigerian people and external interests, represented in the main by transnational corporations that are involved in the exploitation of Nigeria ‘for the development of Nigeria’.

6. Consequences of the Nature of the Nigerian State for Oil Exploitation and Expropriation in the Niger Delta

The nature of the Nigerian state has had fundamental implications for oil extraction and exploitation activities in the Niger Delta. In turn, these oil extraction activities have been heavily implicated in the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. There are two areas in which the nature of the Nigerian state has had particular consequences for the process of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. These are (i) the regulatory framework provided by the Nigerian state for the exploitation of the oil and gas resources of the Niger Delta and (ii) the execution of a garrisoning agenda by the state in the Niger Delta.

6.1. The Regulatory Framework for Oil and Gas Exploitation

It is a well-established fact that the framework of rules and regulations enacted by the Nigerian state for the exploitation of the oil and gas resources in the Niger Delta by western transnational oil companies is weak and open to flagrant abuse. The express intent of the regulatory framework is to give the state and the oil companies unfettered control not only over the oil and gas resources but to ensure maximum extraction of surplus value at the least cost and without regards for the environmental and natural rights of the peoples of the Niger Delta. The general purpose of the framework of rules and regulations for oil and gas exploitation in the Niger Delta has been summed up by Sagay (2001:25) in the following words: “The policy of squeezing maximum production from the Niger Delta at the expense of its environment and future is not an accident based upon ignorance. It is a deliberate policy which has been complemented by a harsh and oppressive legal regime.”

In order to understand the relationship between the regulatory regime for oil and gas exploitation and the actual activities embarked upon by transnational oil companies in the Niger Delta, it is necessary to cite some of the legal provisions in existence. The more important ones are:

- **The Land Use Act of 1978** transferred ownership of land previously owned by the communities to the Governors of the states. This Act expropriates the land from the people without any compensation whatsoever.
- **The Petroleum Decree (No 51) of 1969** which vests ownership and control of all petroleum resources, in, under or upon any lands in Nigeria upon the Federal Government of Nigeria, rather than upon the people in, under or upon whose lands such resources are found.
- **Decree No. 9 of 1971** which voided the provisions of section (140 (6) of the 1963 Constitution to the effect that all minerals, both solid and oil, found in the continental shelf of a region of Nigeria belonged exclusively to that region

and now vested these and other rights (ownership and title to the territorial waters, royalties, rents and revenues derived from or relating to the exploitation of petroleum in the continental shelf and seaward appurtenance of the states) in the Federal government of Nigeria.

- **Revenue sharing formula** provided for in the various Constitutions from 1960 until the present. The effect of the constitutional provisions in this regard is that over the years, the Federal government and the multinational oil companies have exercised the right to expropriate the oil resources and people of the Niger Delta without any corresponding sense of responsibility or accountability.
- **Sections 40(3), 42(3) and 44(3) of the 1979, 1989 and 1999 Constitutions**, which reinforce the exclusive ownership by the Federal Government of the mineral resources, found in any community.
- **The Oil Pipelines Act of 1965, the Petroleum Drilling and Production Regulations of 1969 and the Petroleum Decree of 1969** which leave illiterate and usually isolated communities at the mercy of multinational oil companies on the issues of compensation in cases of ecological damage arising from leakage, spillage and other oil exploitation activities.
- **The 1985 Associated Gas Re-injection (Amendment) Decree (1985)** which confers powers on the Minister of Petroleum Resources to exempt oil companies from harnessing associated gases if in his opinion, such gases cannot be put to productive use or are not technically exploitable.

Based upon statistics provided by petroleum economist, Sagay (2001:42) has noted that the laws on gas flaring exempt:

55 out of 84 Shell fields, 10 out of Mobil's 15, 4 out of Agip's 22, 7 out of Gulf's 17, 3 out of Texaco's 5, 4 out of Elf's 6, 1 out of Ashland's 3 and 1 each for Tenneco and Pan Ocean. A total of 86 out of 155 oil-fields are thereby unaffected by this Decree (on gas flaring), and the particular oil fields exempted amount to roughly two third of current associated gas output. The remaining 69 oil fields are, however, subject to a penalty of 2.5 American cents per 1,000 cubic feet of gas flared, which has already been affected but for which – apparently – no formal legal basis exists. This penalty is the liability of the operating company, and NNPC (which theoretically holds controlling shares in the companies) will not contribute.

6.2. The Nigerian State and Its Garrisoning Agenda for the Niger Delta

The Nigerian state's regulatory framework for oil extraction activities is supported by a garrisoning agenda of the Niger Delta. Michael Fleshman (2000: 180, 186, 189-190) has documented that:

For decades, U.S. and European oil companies have operated behind the bayonets of successive Nigerian military regimes. Over time, the companies have become the effective local governments in the areas in which they operate. The companies have often corrupted and de-legitimized traditional rulers, operate free of environmental or industrial regulation and wield de facto operational control of local military and police forces, engaging directly and indirectly in gross human rights abuses, and despoiling the fragile Delta Niger

ecosystem... Leaked (Shell) company and Nigerian government documents have subsequently revealed that Shell closely monitored Saro-Wiwa's foreign travels and collaborated with the Babangida and Abacha regimes to crush MOSOP's structures on the ground... Chevron avoided virtually any mention of its presence in the Niger Delta... All that changed with the revelation that Chevron had flown Nigerian naval personnel and Mobile Police platform in May 1998 to remove unarmed Ijaje youths occupying the facility in a dispute over compensation and employment. Two young men were shot dead and a third was wounded. Others were arrested and tortured... A few months later, Chevron provided helicopters and boats to the Nigerian military for use in attacks on Ijaw supporters of the Kaiama Declaration...

In his book titled *'The OMPADEC Dream'*, Horsfall (2000:39), former head of the National Security Organisation (NSO) and first CEO of OMPADEC gives an account of the background to the creation of the OMPADEC that should also serve as an eye-opener about the motives of the Nigerian state and the global oil companies in the Niger Delta. This is what he says:

Different persons – politicians, ex-governors, violent protesters, environmental groups, traditional rulers and various other individuals or groups have claimed at different times for having made the decisive contribution which forced President Babangida to finally create a special Commission to develop the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta. I guess every one has the right and freedom to claim as he wishes. Babangida, alone, in the end, knows what finally motivated him to create OMPADEC. My own 'fight' came through an accidental encounter with a top white official of one of the leading exploration companies. After he had attended a top-level meeting at which the option to garrison the oil exploration areas and use force to dispel violent attacks on oil installations was agreed, the official paid a courtesy call on me. During our discussion, he exposed diagrams and other details on the issue of garrisoning. I 'ceased' these from him. With them I had audience with the President and during the discussion that followed, I expressed my grave fears about the security and other consequences that would attend such action. The President was probably convinced, discussed the alternative of a development commission with me and instructed me to make jottings on the matter for him which was passed to the then Attorney General of the Federation Sir Clement Akpamgbo (SAN). The OMPADEC decree seems to have developed from these jottings submitted to the Attorney General.

In essence, Horsfall's revelations are as instructive as they are alarming. These revelations clearly indicate not only that the Nigerian state sees garrisoning of the Niger Delta as a legitimate means for conducting oil exploitation activities but also the symbiotic relationship between the highest levels of Nigerian state officials and those of the transnational oil companies in the design of measures for subjugating the peoples of the Niger Delta.

The garrisoning agenda of the Niger Delta has a long history but it acquired particular importance with the emergence of youth, community-based and related organisations in the Niger Delta that proclaimed an open agenda of interrogating the Nigerian state and the oil companies on the structure of control over the oil and gas resources of the area. Foremost among these organisations were the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) and the Chikoko Movement. In the name of preventing violence from the interrogative activities of these and other organisations, the Nigerian state deployed all arms of the state security apparatus to the area. The latest development, as we have seen, has been the deployment of USA troops to the Niger Delta for the ostensible purpose of training Nigerian troops in the art of military combat in the swamps and mangroves of the Niger Delta.

The garrisoning agenda operates at a number of interrelated levels. The first level is the criminalisation of the peoples of the Niger Delta. The activists and community leaders in the Niger Delta who oppose the exploitative and ecologically devastating activities of the Nigerian state and the global oil companies are called ‘vandals’, ‘saboteurs’, ‘criminals’, and ‘murderers’. In order to set the state for the military operation by the Nigerian state, which wiped out Odi village and its inhabitants in 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo wrote a letter to the Governor of Bayelsa state on 20th November 1999, where he declared that:

Recent events of kidnapping and subsequent wilful murder of seven policemen are clear demonstrations that you have lost grip of the security situation in the state. You will recall that when you reported the dastardly act to me last Saturday I immediately instructed that everything must be done to apprehend the perpetrators off this heinous crime. Your immediate reaction was that it would not be possible to arrest the culprits as the village had been deserted. I invited you to the National Security Council meeting on Monday, 8th November 1999, to enable you listen to the views of members, which should have given you some indication of the feeling of outrage and total condemnation of the incident by members of Council. In council, you even tried to find lame reasons to justify the gruesome murder of those policemen who were carrying out their lawful duties. During Council deliberations, it was further reported that four soldiers had been kidnapped while four others had been decapitated. You assured members of Council that the perpetrators would definitely be arrested.

It is significant that after the National Security Council of 9th November 1999 had deliberated upon and condemned the killing of seven policemen in your State, you seemed to take no effective measure to arrest the culprits. Instead, reports have reached me that 3 other policemen and civilians have been killed. It is apparent from the foregoing that the security situation in your State is getting beyond control. It seems to me that if those responsible for the maintenance of law and order are not safe in your State, there is little hope for the safety of private citizens.

These killings from reports reaching me were committed in broad daylight. It should be quite easy, therefore, to arrest the killers with whom it is reported that your government was holding negotiations before the killing of the policemen and those with whom your government had negotiated in the past. They are criminals.

As can be seen, the President made no distinction between those responsible for the actual abduction of the state security operatives in the area and those with whom the governor of the state ‘was holding negotiations’. They were, as all the rest of the Odi villagers, children and women who were subsequently massacred shortly after, ‘criminals’. There is even a hint in the letter from the President that the members of the Bayelsa state government and the governor of the state are also ‘criminals’. Indeed as Nnimmo Bassey (2003) of Environmental Rights Action (ERA) who visited Odi after the massacre has reported, “The graffiti left by the soldiers show deep-seated animosity to the local people, which suggest that the troops may have undergone a period of indoctrination before the attack. Take these samplers: ‘We go kill all Ijaw people with our gun’; ‘Odi where is your pride?’; ‘Ijaw face, monkey face’; and ‘Shame to the Ijaw people’. One of the graffiti recommends, ‘Come to Odi and learn a lesson’.”

The second level of the garrisoning agenda is the actual war being waged by the combined armed forces of the Nigerian state and the transnational oil companies against the communities in the Niger Delta. As Odi, Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni murders and other examples show, the criminalisation of the people is a necessary first step to the war that is then waged against the ‘criminals’. The situation in the

Niger Delta is that this war is waged on a daily basis. As a result of this war, some persons are killed and some houses and fishing canoes are destroyed every day in the Niger Delta. The evidence relating to the deaths and destruction in the Niger Delta is abundant and has of recent been richly documented in the literature (especially: *Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Nigerian State*, a CDHR special publication, 1998; *Blood Trail: Repression and Resistance in the Niger Delta*, a CLO publication, 2002; *Testimonies*, an ERA publication, 2001; *Etche Rejection of Shell (SPDC) Integrated Waste Management Facility by the Etche Ethnic Nationality*, 2001; *Boiling Point*, a publication by CDHR, 2000).

Beginning with the violent repression of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force which was formed in the early sixties under Isaac Adaka Boro through the macabre murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots by the Nigerian State under Abacha in 1998 to the pillage and massacre of the Odi people, a pillage and massacre reminiscent of medieval wars, under the current Obasanjo regime the life of the people of the Niger Delta has been soaked in blood, soot and humiliation.

There is a need for a thorough appreciation of what being ‘soaked in blood, soot and humiliation’ means to be able to construct any strategy for the development of the Niger Delta. This is important because development, is primarily about and for people; it is constructed for and with those who have life, who have an unshakable belief that they have a right to life and that their right will not be capriciously violated by others, let alone by those who claim to govern them. Therefore, to appreciate what being ‘soaked in blood, soot and humiliation’ means in the communities of the Niger Delta it is necessary to use a few of the recent accounts of those who have documented, have narrowly escaped killing or may yet be killed in the Niger Delta. The following accounts, which are taken from CLO’s recent publication, *‘Blood Trail: Repression and Resistance in the Niger Delta’*, are indicative of the daily pattern of life in the Niger Delta.

- Friday, October 29, 1999

THE CHOBA RAPE

“Those who chose rape lost their dignity, those who gained their dignity lost their lives. The violation of the rights to dignity of the human person has remained one of the most engaging pastimes of the military in Nigeria. At Choba, soldiers added another inglorious feather to their cap by recording what are perhaps the worst incidents of rape in Nigerian history. The following report is a sad tale of Nigerian women being turned into spoils of war...

On Sunday November 7, 1999 the nation woke up to the shocking pictures of Choba women being horsewhipped and raped by men in uniform. The four photographs were published in Punch Newspaper after its courageous and versatile reporter, Adewale Adeoye, managed to obtain them from activists he met while working on his story.

Unfortunately, on Thursday, October 28, the Governor of River State read the riot act at 8.00 p.m and he specifically singled out Choba among several troubled areas in Rivers State, namely Bonny, Eleme, Okrika, Obelle etc. In the early hours of Friday 29, at about 9.00a.m, soldiers and mobile policemen were drafted to Choba supported by two armored tank vehicles which entered the community through the East-West road and through the Rumuokwuta-Choba-Uzuoba road axis and on arrival, started shooting into the air, an action which woke up the inhabitants of the community... From the time of the arrival of the regular and mobile policemen, the people started leaving the town through bush tracks to the neighboring village and towns like Ozuoba, Rumuosi and Elikahia.”

A woman who was repeatedly raped said:

“...On that Sunday, I came to pick some of my things. I got to my place and opened the door. Just then two mobile policemen and soldier came. They seized me and raped me there. I could not fight them off. I was crying, but one of the mobile policemen kicked me here (showing a wound on the right leg with his boot. I was so confused. They were beating me. How could I have fought back? I was so confused that after it all, I ran away leaving my door unlocked and by the time I returned, everything I had, had been stolen...”

The New York-based Human Rights Watch recorded interviews with victims of sexual abuse by soldiers and policemen. One victim in Yenagoa stated that:

“...It was during the curfew. By seven in the evening we were all asleep because of the curfew. Three policemen came in my place and told me to open the door. They said I must come out because the soldiers are looking for me. I didn't come out but they broke in and raped me. They said they were going to drag me to the road for the other soldiers to use. One other Mopol (mobile police) man came and was talking to them. I managed to run away to the waterside, where I stayed till the next day. Many other women have been raped. One of them was married and because of the shame, she has gone back to her own community. The Army is still coming and flogging and terrorizing people everyday. Nothing like this has happened before...”

- October 22,1998

THE GBARAUN MACABRE DANCE

The people of Ikebiri had barely smoothed the earth over the graves of their slain when a similar trail of blood was visited on the town of Gbaraun...

The 200,000-strong Gbaraun clan in Ijawland, about two hours' drive from Yenagoa and composed mainly of fishermen and traders, is a cluster of 18 autonomous communities and 215 fishing settlements in the South Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Business was going on as usual on Thursday, October 22, 1998 when a sea truck belonging to Sea Truck of Nigeria Ltd roared through the Gbaraun water-ways at about 12.30 pm on its way to the Atlantic Ocean, capsizing several canoes on the waterfront. Property belonging to the market women and fishermen were either lost or damaged but the navigator of the tugboat failed to stop. The aggrieved youths gave chase, whereupon 10 soldiers emerged from the tugboat and opened fire with live ammunition, killing five and wounding six others. The CLO subsequently learnt that the people involved in the massacre were men from the Bayelsa State Special Security outfit, Operation Salvage, led by one Major Oputa. Reliable information made available to the CLO revealed that it was the same Major who ordered his boys to shoot.

- November 1999

ODI GENOCIDE

The report on the disaster at Odi is remarkable for its significance in the democracy perception index of the present civilian administration of Olusegun Obasanjo. Illustrating the excesses inherent in the deployment of military force in the resolution of issues which fall squarely within the jurisdiction and competence of the Nigeria Police Force, the report on the Odi Genocide provides rich food for thought

A few kilometers from Yenagoa, on the road past Kaiama, is the town of Odi, former headquarters of Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area. It used to be the second-largest town in the State after Amassoma until November 20, 1999 when soldiers deployed on the orders of President Olusegun Obasanjo leveled all but three buildings and killed an

uncountable number of people. Scratched out on the remaining burnt-out walls were the considered thoughts of the participating soldiers: “Shame on your Juju, Egbesu,” “Bayelsa will be silent forever”, “We will kill all Ijaws”; “Egbesu, why you run?”, “Our power pass Egbesu”; “Next time even the trees will not be spared”; “This land is for Soja, not for Ijaws.”

We saw no single livestock, poultry, or other domestic animals except a stray cat. The community’s 60,000 inhabitants had fled into the forest or been arrested or killed. Only a few thoroughly traumatized old women, and children could be seen around, some of them suffering from fractures and other injuries sustained while trying to escape from advancing soldiers. We also received information that the soldiers were particularly contemptuous of books. Several libraries and educational materials were targeted and destroyed.

Christy Inoh, 47, looking emaciated and tired, gazed stupefied at what remained of her home. When approached, she collected herself enough to say: “My husband and I used all we had to build that house you see there. We have been working on it for the past three years. See what the soldiers have done. I have no place to go to.”

Another Odi villager said: “We were in the house. We were all the time hearing shooting and explosions, then we heard the soldiers speaking Hausa outside. Then they set the house on fire, and in fear I told my husband that he should go out. He was reluctant. Then we came out and some of the soldiers who were in the sitting room pointed their guns at us. They asked me to move to one side of the room and then they shot him dead outside the house. They left him there. Then I asked who was going to bury him? Since they had killed him? They dug a small hole and put him there but his head and some other parts were still showing. I complained to some of the old men in the village and their officer sent one soldier and some old women and one of our men to bring out the body and they dug a deeper grave.”

- January, 1999

MORE TALES OF WOE IN OPIA AND IKENYAN

Two small Ijaw communities of Delta State recorded a different kind of violation from the ones so far reported when armed soldiers declared war on some oil producing communities in complicity with Chevron Nigeria Limited...

- August 1999

THE ILAJE-AROGBO IJAW CRISIS: BLOOD IN THE CREEKS

Even as the Ubeji community suffered death by installment, an even worse scenario unfolded in Ondo State, enmeshing the Arogbo Ijaws and the Ilajes in a spiral of violence and bloodshed...

The guns bearing death are silent. So are the cries of dying humanity. The stench of rotting flesh has vanished, washed away by the unceasing tide unmindful of the drama to which it bore witness. An eerie calm pervades the river in Ondo State where, a few months earlier, the Ilajes and their Arogbo Ijaw neighbors engaged each other in an insane orgy of mutually-assured destruction that left over 3,000 dead.

Fisher families ply their trade in dug-out canoes, searching for the increasingly diminishing stock of seafood. Occasionally, a woman with a child strapped to her back can be seen paddling a canoe filled sometimes with wood, at other time with plastic cans of water, her other children piled at the other end of the canoe, the eldest manipulating an outsized paddle.

These testimonies do not include the massacre of the Umuechem people in 1990 or the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Ogoni compatriots on 10th November 1998 by the Nigerian state in collaboration with the transnational oil companies. Neither do they include the thousands of oil extraction motivated deaths and destruction in the Niger Delta in more recent times. What they do indicate, however, is that in the Niger Delta, more than in any other part of Nigeria, life has become nasty, brutish and short.

Indeed, long before the gruesome murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Ogoni compatriots by the Nigerian state in 1998, a number of other murders, arrests and detention of community activists had become a regular feature of the means of silencing opposition to the exploitative and environment degrading activities of the transnational oil companies in the Niger Delta. In 1966, Isaac Adaka Boro and members of Delta Volunteer Service were sentenced to death for engaging the Nigerian state in an effort to draw attention to the rapacious exploitation and degradation of the Niger Delta environment and its people. About three decades later, the people of Umuechem were murdered in cold blood by the same Nigerian state for protesting against Shell's violent exploitation and suppression of the peoples of the area. Over the period, war and murder have been complimented by other measures: the promotion of inter-ethnic and inter-nationality conflicts and wars in the area, deployment of massive propaganda, disempowerment of the communities, co-optation and incorporation of various levels and sections of local elites in the Niger Delta into the process of sharing the spoils from the looting and plundering of the Niger Delta, and flagrant human rights abuses.

The violence organised against the people of the Niger Delta by the Nigerian state in collaboration with and under the tutelage and guidance of foreign oil and financial interests continues to this day. The hope raised by the emergence of a civilian regime under (Rtd.) General Obasanjo that the criminalisation of and war against the communities and peoples of the Niger Delta would be brought to an end has completely evaporated. The razing of Odi to the ground by Obasanjo, some six months after he took office, was meant to send a clear message to those opposed to the rapacious exploitation in the Niger Delta: it was going to be oil business as usual and the people of the Niger Delta were being warned that although there was a new 'democratic' government in Nigeria, the multi-national oil companies were still firmly in control of the apparatus of the Nigerian state. This situation which is a continuation of the violence of the British colonialists against the Nigerian people confirms Amilcar Cabral's (1969) famous observation that, "some independent African states preserved the structures of the colonial state... They only replaced a white man with a black man..." In fact, it would be correct to say that, in the case of Nigeria, they did worse. They did not even replace a white man with a black man; they became, of their own free will, 'house negroes' to the white man.

PART III.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

7. Transnational Oil and Gas Companies and the Niger Delta

We have already cited Michael Fleshman's (2000: 180, 186, 189-190) observation that, "for decades, U.S. and European oil companies have operated behind the bayonets of successive Nigerian military regimes. Over time, the companies have become the effective local governments in the areas in which they operate." The important questions that the observation of Fleshman raises are which are these oil companies? Why are they so powerful in relation to the Nigerian state and the peoples of the Niger Delta? How has it become possible for them to, "have become the effective local governments," to be able frequently to, "corrupt and de-legitimise traditional rulers, operate free of environmental or industrial regulation and wield de facto operational control of local military and police forces," and even provide military hardware: "helicopters and boats to the Nigerian military for use in attacks," on communities in the Niger Delta? To answer these questions, we need an understanding of the nature and character of the Nigerian state, an understanding also of the types of transnational oil companies in the Niger Delta, the assumptions that guide their operations globally and the specific methods of oil extraction that these assumptions justify and legitimise in the Niger Delta.

7.1. The Global Oil and Gas Companies in the Niger Delta

Starting from 1956 when oil was first discovered in commercial quantities at Oloibiri, the exploitation of the resource has been dominated by an assortment of foreign transnational oil conglomerates. The distribution of oil exploitation by the transnational oil companies involved shows that Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC or simply Shell) enjoys a position of pre-eminence (Table 5). As I have documented elsewhere, although the Nigerian state through the NNPC theoretically holds the controlling shares in each of the six major oil companies, SPDC is certainly the dominant and also the oldest player in the field accounting for almost half of the total production of oil in the country. In both Bayelsa and Rivers States alone, SPDC's seismic lines cover 56,000 kilometres; it has 349 drilling sites, 7000 kilometres of flow lines, 400 kilometres of pipelines, 22 flow stations and one terminal. In Table 1, we provide information on the major oil and gas companies operating in the Niger Delta. The way in which SPDC exploits this pre-eminent position and, the general conduct of other global oil companies, not only in relation to the Nigerian state but more especially, the communities and environment of the Niger Delta, are largely responsible for the unique problem of development and underdevelopment in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

Among these oil companies, Shell has acquired particular notoriety for its wanton disregard for the people and environment of the Niger Delta. Its close relationship with the Nigerian state has been widely acknowledged and held responsible for the omissions and commissions of the existing regulatory framework for oil exploitation. Thus Shell was involved in laundering the image of the Abacha regime before European and other parliaments following the international outrage that greeted the

murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other MOSOP leaders in 1998. Okonta and Douglas (2001: 14) who have closely followed and documented the activities of Shell and *'In Where Vultures Feast'* have observed that:

Royal Dutch/Shell is the operating company of the largest oil-producing joint venture in Nigeria. The multinational accounts for some 50 per cent of oil production in the country, the bulk of it in the Niger Delta where the company opened its first well in 1958. The people of the Niger Delta therefore see Shell as the number one culprit in the economic and ecological war currently being waged against them. Slowly but relentlessly, such oil production activities as gas flaring, oil spillage, indiscriminate construction of canals and waste dumping have brought the human ecosystem of the area to the point of collapse... Shell pays the affected communities little or no compensation. Nor do these communities receive a fair share of the oil royalties running into billions of dollars per year, the bulk of which is shared among corrupt government officials, Shell, and the other Western multinational oil companies... Trapped between a vicious global corporation and a visionless government, these local communities have now taken to the path of non-violence protest in a bid to protect what little remains of their environment and source of livelihood. The result has been mass slaughter, raping of women and children and the sacking of entire towns and villages, horrendous acts orchestrated by Shell officials and Nigerian troops in their pay.

Table 1. The Major Transnational Oil Companies in the Niger Delta.

No	Oil Company	Shareholders	Operators	Share of National Production
1	Shell Petroleum Development (SPDC)	NNPC – 55% Shell – 30% Elf – 10% Agip – 05%	Shell	42.0%
2	Mobil Producing Nigeria	NNPC – 50% Mobil – 42%	Mobil	21.0%
3	Chevron Nigeria	NNPC – 60% Chevron – 40%	Chevron	19.0%
4	Nigeria Agip Oil	NNPC – 60% Agip – 40%	Agip	7.5%
5	Elf Petroleum Nigeria	NNPC – 60% Elf – 40%	Elf	2.6%
6	Texaco Overseas (Nigeria) Petroleum	NNPC – 60% Texaco – 20% Chevron – 20%	Texaco	1.7%
TOTAL				93.8%

Source: Iyayi (2000)

7.2. The Assumptions of Trans-National Oil Companies

The discussion of the nature and role of the Nigerian state provides part of the background for understanding how it has become possible for the global oil companies in the Niger Delta to 'have become the effective local governments. The other part of the explanation for the role and methods adopted by the global oil companies for their extractive activities in the Niger Delta is to be found in the set of assumptions that guide their activities in and relationships with peoples of the Third World. Elsewhere (Iyayi, 2000:170) we have documented that: "two forms of oil exploitation may be recognised: a cooperative form in which there is a balanced concern for the environment and all the parties involved and an exploitative form in which the constant and overriding goal is to satisfy the interests of the dominant, usually foreign and international capital involved in the oil extracting activities." That

oil exploitation is undertaken in the Niger Delta from the latter framework flows directly from a set of assumptions and hence ideological framework that characterise the relationship of oil and gas companies with countries of the Third World.

The activities of the transnational oil corporations that operate in the Niger Delta are conducted within an ideological framework that operates at two interdependent and mutually reinforcing levels. The first is the level of the TNCs themselves while the second is at the level of the home governments of the TNCs and the multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO that provide the institutional support for the TNCs (Susskind, 2002: 2-3). This ideology often has clear elements that are applied by all TNCs in their activities all over the world. Korten (1996: 131, 70-71) has identified several key elements of this ideology and they include the beliefs that:

- The world's money, technology, and markets should be controlled and managed by gigantic global corporations;
- Corporations should be free to act solely on the basis of profitability without regard to national or local consequences;
- There should be no loyalties to place and community;
- People are motivated primarily by greed;
- The relentless pursuit of greed and acquisition leads to socially optimal outcomes.

Ashton-Jones (1998:130) has also pointed out that the willingness with which multinational oil companies tend to exploit the undemocratic and corrupt regimes of most Third World countries arises from an entrenched oil industry culture that defines the relationship of Western oil companies with Third World countries. This oil industry culture is founded on five assumptions:

- That profit maximization is the only basis upon which a company can run, so that any expenditure beyond what is required to get out the oil is resisted;
- That a deal can be made with governments only, regardless of the government's legality or morality;
- That once an arrangement has been made with a government, a mining company can do what it likes, in fact, to act as if it is a government agency;
- That the "market", (that is, the industrialized world) has a right to have the resources it wants, at the lowest price, and regardless of the costs to local people who are obliged to play host to mining companies; and
- That "we", the mining companies, know best and are acting responsibly...

Continuing, Ashton-Jones (1998:31) says:

Generally, neither the companies nor the governments with whom they associate, (from both first and third worlds) are willing to accept any divergence from this culture which is reinforced with a mixture of cynical public relations and intimidation. It is fair to say that the adverse impacts of mining upon the lives of host communities (and, for that matter, the extravagant use of mineral resources by the industrialized world) arise more from this immoral culture (this wickedness) than from anything else.

At the level of the state and multilateral structures that support the activities of TNCs, the ideology is even more specific, supremacist and even racist. Economic Justice (2000:4) has documented that when Lawrence Summers was chief economist of the World Bank, he authored an internal World Bank memorandum in 1991 which argued that,

the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable...Under-populated countries in Africa are vastly under-polluted, their air quality is vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City. Only the lamentable facts that so much pollution is generated by non-tradable industries (transport, electrical generation) and that the unit transport costs of solid waste are so high prevent world welfare enhancing trade in air pollution and waste.

The memorandum further insisted that, “the death of an African due to toxic pollution is less costly in economic terms than the death of a Northern citizen because the forgone earnings from increased mortality are less per capita...Concern for environmental quality rises with income. Transferring polluting industries to low-income countries would be welfare enhancing since it would augment their money incomes.” This racist position in the World Bank finds a close parallel in official thinking in the US about its right to the resources of the world in general and the Third World in particular.

7.3. Methods of Oil and Gas Exploitation, Expropriation and Appropriation

Ideologies can suggest strategies; justify means – ends choices and even the choice of particular ends. They can help rationalise actions that border on the criminal or, that are in fact, criminal. The slave trade was rationalised, for example, on the ideology of the superiority of races, the needs of capitalist commerce and development. Today, the above assumptions of the TNCs and their home governments determine the kind of methods that the oil companies adopt and the relationship that they forge in their exploitation of the oil and gas resources in the Niger Delta. An appreciation of these methods and their consequences are central to an understanding of the nature of the problem of development in the Niger Delta and therefore of the nature of the integrative framework of development required for the area. Indeed, these methods have been well documented (Olorode, 1989; Ashton-Jones, 1998; ERA/FoEN, 1999; Manby, 1998; Iyayi, 1999; Okonta, 1998; Okonta and Douglas, 2001).

Thus the methods of oil exploitation have included gross environmental damage through gas flaring, oil spillage, indiscriminate construction of canals and waste dumping; embarking upon major oil and gas exploitation activities without conducting environmental impact assessments; the application of continuous pressure on the Nigerian state through their home governments for the adoption and maintenance of weak policy regimes on oil and gas exploitation; arrest and detention of community activists opposed to their policies and activities; the murder of community activists opposed to their policies and activities in the area (Shell was, for example, implicated in the murder of Nigeria’s foremost environmentalist and Ogoni nationalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa); promotion of inter-ethnic and inter-nationality conflicts and wars in the area; deployment of massive propaganda; cooptation and incorporation of various levels and sections of local elites in the Niger Delta into the process of sharing the profits from the looting and plundering of the Niger Delta; flagrant human rights abuses; payment of little or no compensation for massive ecological damage; massive bribery of officials of the Nigerian state; procurement of uniforms and firearms for Nigerian troops deployed to the area; silence and or blaming the victims when they complain or protest about ecological disasters caused by the activities of TNCs; adoption and deployment of various community relations strategies that involve denial, silence, blaming the victim, defiance and a ‘wallpaper

factory mentality' (Iyayi, 2000:159-167); and development and submission of proposals for national legislation.

In Nigeria, the role of multinational oil companies, especially Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in drafting legislation on oil exploitation, has been subtle but for this reason, it has been no less devastating in its consequences. It is widely suspected that SPDC and the other multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta are responsible for the enactment, amendments and lack of effect given to the various laws that the Nigerian state has passed since the late sixties to determine the rate and level of ecological abuse in the Niger Delta. For example, Regulation 42 of the Drilling and Producing Regulation of 1969 requiring oil mining companies to harness gas extracts arising from oil extraction within five years was amended in 1985. The amendment allowed oil companies to continue with gas flaring. For this reason, the Niger Delta oil fields have the highest level of gas flaring in the entire world, contributing 0.2 percent to worldwide carbon emissions and global warming (Iyayi, 2000; CLO, 2002).

The transnational oil companies have also been involved in the preparation of blueprints and strategies for national development for the Nigerian state. Environmental Rights Action (Nigeria) has noted, for example, that Shell played a leading role in the preparation of the Vision 2010 document, which contains the blueprint for Nigeria's economic, political, social and cultural development in the 21st century and beyond. Beyond these methods, the oil companies also offer liaison and bridging services between the Nigerian state and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. The purpose of these and other services is to enable the oil TNCs exercise greater control over the Nigerian state, the regime of laws that are provided for oil and gas exploitation and unfettered use of whatever means they deem fit in their extractive activities.

8. Consequences of Oil and Gas Exploitation in the Niger Delta

The overall consequence of the assumptions and methods adopted by the Nigerian state and the transnational oil companies for oil exploitation in the Niger Delta is the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. This underdevelopment takes two forms and operates at two levels. First, the Niger Delta suffers from the status of Nigeria as an underdeveloped country. Secondly, it suffers from the surplus extracting activities of the Nigerian state in collaboration with an assortment of transnational oil companies. It is no surprise indeed that some commentators have referred to the situation in the Niger Delta as one of 'internal colonialism'. Specifically, the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta is manifested in several conditions. The first is the general level of mass poverty within the communities of the Niger Delta. The second is the poverty of infrastructures. The third is the massive ecological devastation of the area. The fourth is the spiralling incidents of intra- and inter-ethnic wars.

8.1. Poverty in the Niger Delta

Poverty in the Niger Delta is a natural result of the various methods adopted by the Nigerian state and the transnational oil companies for oil extraction in the Niger Delta. This poverty is produced and reinforced by the relationship between the huge sums extracted from the area and the paltry amounts provided in the form of

derivation revenue to the area, the high rate of death and destruction in the area, the massive rate and level of ecological damage and the general state of war and conflict in the area. In turn poverty helps to reinforce the further development of some of these consequences; it fans the fire of ethnic conflicts and wars thereby producing more death and destruction.

However, in order to meaningfully discuss the incidence and severity of poverty in the Niger Delta, three observations need to be made. The first is that the poverty in the Niger Delta is inseparable from the poverty in Nigeria as a whole. This means that indices of poverty in the Niger Delta will need to be referred against those, or indeed extracted from those that apply to Nigeria as a whole. It also means that the Niger Delta situation simply reflects a unique form of the poverty in Nigeria. The second observation is the general poverty of data on the poverty in Nigeria and in the Niger Delta in particular. It is true that in recent times, more data has become available. But this data has usually been provided by external sources and, in any case, present 'a better case scenario' than what actually obtains. This situation demands that existing data needs to be interpreted more pessimistically than optimistically. It also indicates that rather than rely purely on economic and social indicators, the comments of the poor themselves will need to be taken into account in determining the level of poverty in the Niger Delta.

The third observation relates to the need to identify the poor as being a distinct social group whose members share the characteristics that are associated with the poor. By this token, not all the people in the Niger Delta are poor. Indeed, the poverty of the poor is largely a result of the activities of those who are not poor both within and outside the Niger Delta. In the Niger Delta, this situation is so obvious that it needs no further elaboration. Nevertheless it explains the paradoxical situation that while being from the Niger Delta themselves, the ruling elites in the area have been among the first to canvass for and apply extreme violence in dealing with the demands of the poor in the Niger Delta. Also, among the poor in the Niger Delta, it is to be expected that levels of poverty will also vary between (i) the poor generally as a group with some being marginally poor and others being core or abjectly poor; (ii) men and women with women being generally poorer than men; (iii) urban and rural areas with rural areas experiencing higher levels of poverty than urban areas; (iv) age groups with children and the very old being generally poorer than those in middle age; and (v) occupational groups with farmers being general poorer than workers and traders. Thus while indices and comments on poverty will indicate averages, there are quite some variations along the above lines in the degree to which poverty is experienced and the consequences resulting from such experience for the groups involved. Overall however, all these groups experience want in some or all of the conditions that define poverty.

The incidence of poverty by geopolitical zones presents the opportunity for reviewing the level of poverty in the Niger Delta (Table 2). The data shows that in 1997 the level of poverty in the South-South Zone which includes the Niger Delta was 78.0% and, (i) higher than the national average of 69.2%, (ii) more than doubled the poverty level (38.0%) in 1985/86 and, (iii) was the second highest in the country after the South-East Zone (79.5%). Some of the areas of the South-East Zone (Imo State) are part of the Eastern Niger Delta. In general, the evidence indicates that the incidence, depth and severity of poverty have been growing in the Niger Delta over the years.

The above statistics are supported by comments of the poor in the Niger Delta. These comments describe life in the Niger Delta as nasty, brutish and short. They indicate a situation of extreme poverty for the vast majority of the people characterised by the prevalence of hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment, poor housing, lack of basic infrastructures and facilities.

Table 2: Poverty Levels by Geo-political Zones

Geopolitical Zone	Percentage		
	1985/6	1992/3	1997
North East	53.2	N/A	68.0
North West	48.4	N/A	62.0
Middle Belt	48.4	N/A	53.0
South East	30.9	N/A	79.5
South West	42.0	N/A	74.1
South South	38.0	N/A	78.6
Nationwide	43.5	34.10	69.2

Source: National Policy on Poverty Eradication

8.2. The Poverty of Infrastructures

The parlous state of infrastructures in the Niger Delta is also indicative of the general level of underdevelopment in the area. The state of roads in the Niger Delta compared with the state of roads in other parts of the country provides one area where this is readily obvious. It is estimated that between 1956 and 2000, the Nigerian state extracted about \$30.00 trillion from the sale of crude oil and gas in the Niger Delta (Darah, 2001:19). Yet a review of the relative length and state of Federal Government roads in the Niger Delta as compared with other parts of Nigeria (Table 3) provides strong evidence for the argument that the Nigerian state has been consciously committed to the development of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta.

Table 3 Distribution and State of Federal Roads across the States in Nigeria

No	State	Total length of federal Road Network	Percentage in		
			Good Condition %	Fair Condition %	Poor Condition %
1	Anambra	1,580	21.0	16.0	68.0
2	Bauchi	1,778	11.0	0.0	89.0
3	Edo/Delta	1,535	21.0	50.0	29.0
4	Benue	1,687	23.0	40.0	37.0
5	Borno/Yobe	2,991	0.0	100.0	0.0
6	Cross River/Akwa Ibom	1,594	24.0	30.0	46.0
7	Taraba/Adamawa	2,932	69.0	0.0	31.0
8	Imo/Abia	1,255	29.0	32.0	39.0
9	Kaduna/Katsina	2,516	78.0	16.0	0.0
10	Kano/Jigawa	1,613	68.0	25.0	7.0
11	Lagos	439	75.0	17.0	8.0
12	Niger	2048	42.0	27.0	30.0
13	Ogun	1,648	34.0	33.0	32.0
14	Ondo	947	3.0	24.0	73.0
15	Oyo/Osun	1,432	25.0	22.0	53.0
16	Plateau	1,795	15.0	48.0	37.0
17	Rivers/Bayelsa	701	69.0	12.0	19.0
18	Sokoto/Kebbi	2,382	50.0	25.0	5.0
19	FCT/Abuja	237	-	-	-
20	Kwara/Kogi	2,188	4.0	4.0	92.0

21	All Federal Roads	(33,298)	22.03*	17.37*	60.6*
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Table compiled from: Ajai (1999:273,283)

*Average for the 30 states except FCT

The data shows that the core Niger Delta has many less kilometres of Federal roads than several other parts of Nigeria. Worse still, the available length of roads is in a far worse state than what is to be found outside the Niger Delta.

8.3. The Niger Delta as an Ecological Wasteland

Reports on the environmental state of the Niger Delta are conclusive that the area has become an ecological wasteland. Several major rivers are heavily polluted; farmlands are under acid rain and oil spills, and carbon dioxide emissions in the area are among the highest in the world. Gas flaring has raised temperatures and rendered large areas inhospitable, oil canals and pipelines crisscross the land making it impossible and dangerous to undertake economic activities on it. For example, it has been calculated that some 45.8 billion kilowatts of heat are discharged into the atmosphere of the Niger Delta from flaring 1.8 billion cubic feet of gas every day (Agbola and Olurin, 2003). It is conservatively estimated that between 1976 and 1996 a total of 1,809,373.68 barrels of crude oil was spilled into the rivers and lands of the Niger Delta (Table 4).

Table 4: Time Series Analysis of Oil Spill in the Niger Delta

S/No	Year	No of Spill	Quantity Spilled (barrels)	Quantity Recovered (barrels)	Net volume lost to the Environment (barrels)
1	1976	128	26,157.00	7,135.00	19,021.50
2	1977	104	32,879.25	1,703.01	31,176.75
3	1978	154	489,294.75	391,445.00	97,849.75
4	1979	157	94,117.13	63,481.20	630,635.93
5	1980	241	600,511.02	42,416.83	558,094.19
6	1981	238	42,722.50	5,470.20	37,252.30
7	1982	257	42,841.00	2,171.40	40,669.60
8	1983	173	48,351.30	6,355.90	41,995.40
9	1984	151	40,209.00	1,644.80	38,564.20
10	1985	187	11,876.60	1,719.30	10,157.30
11	1986	155	12,905.00	552.00	12,358.00
12	1987	129	31,866.00	25,757.00	25,757.00
13	1988	208	9,172.00	1,955.00	7,207.00
14	1989	228	5,956.00	2,153.00	3,803.00
15	1990	166	14,150.35	2,785.96	12,057.80
16	1991	258	108,367.01	2,785.96	105,912.05
17	1992	378	51,187.90	1,476.70	49,711.20
18	1993	453	8,105.32	2,937.08	6,632.11
19	1994	495	35,123.71	2,335.93	32,787.78
20	1995	417	63,677.17	3,110.02	60,568.15
21	1996	158	39,903.67	1,183.81	38,716.86
Total		4,835	1,809,373.68	570,575.10	1,860,927.87

Source: Agbola and Olurin (2003:7-8)

Oil spills occurred on at least 4,835 occasions during the period giving an average of 230.24 spills per year or about two spills every three days. The overall situation has

recently been updated by a UNDP Niger Delta Human Development Report. The report, based on figures obtained from Shell, indicates that a total of 6,817 oil spills occurred in the Niger Delta between 1976 and 2001 (UNDP: 2005, Human Development Report on the Niger Delta). This gives an average of 272.68 spills per annum over a twenty five year period. The relative frequency of oil spills for the 2000 – 2004 period shows that the incident increased. Between 2000 and 2004, about 1,420 spills occurred giving an average of 284 spills per annum which is much higher than the average recorded for the 1976 – 2001 period. These figures are, of course, bound to be much higher if we take account of what might be called the official lying index, which indicates the degree to which official figures are deliberately falsified to vary from the real facts on the ground. The more corrupt a regime and the more emotionally involved its leaders are in maintaining their version of reality as the truth, the higher is the lying index. Official figures therefore need to be multiplied by a certain factor in order to arrive at the correct estimate of the level at which the situation actually exists. Depending on whether the state is interested in exaggerating or minimising the level to which a certain condition exists, the lying index will vary from 0 to 0.9 (in cases of exaggeration) or from 1.1 to 10 (in cases of minimising). In the Niger Delta, official statistics on oil pollution, environmental degradation and deaths and destruction resulting from the activities of the state and the transnational oil and gas corporations seek to hide the extent to which these events occur and therefore need to be corrected, we suggest, by an index of 1.5. This means that the actual number of oil spills during the period would be one and half times the reported number and therefore in the neighbourhood of 6,971 with a total volume of 3,554,205.60 barrels of crude oil.

Many of the spills resulted in major fires in which as in the case of Jesse, over one hundred men, women and children were roasted alive in 1999. As examples of the kind of experiences that are frequently the lot of the communities in the area when oil spills occur, we can cite the following incidents, which are taken from various ERA publications:

- October 1998

THE OBELLE SHELL FIRE

An underground fire in two oil wells belonging to Shell was recorded at Obelle. This resulted in gas emissions that impacted seriously on the health of indigenes, as well as damaging cash crops. But to Shell, nothing was amiss...

- September 20, 1999

BURNING IN BONNY

Goddy Jumbo, an indigene, describes life in Bonny as “chaotic”: In his words:

“At a point we became afraid of the town. We were asking ourselves where were they going to live? Which markets were they going to buy from? We did not want to drive anyone away. Our schools, churches, fields, all available space, were used for shelter. I witnessed a situation where people camping in the open field stayed out in the rain, soaked to their skins but still not moving away. Over 5 persons have stayed with me in my place and presently, I am housing over 10 persons. In each room in my house, there are six or seven people looking for daily bread.

“Experts told us that anyone who drank the water could contract some fatal diseases, including cancer. In view of these developments, including the fact that now in Bonny you cannot distinguish day from night and the NLNG’s doing nothing about this. They estimated the direction of the wind and built their Residential Area I (RAI) so that, in the event of anything like this, there will be no problem. In view of these, we approached them for discussions. They refused to come. As gentle, civilized people we made efforts to reach them to dialogue on these developments. They did not budge, so in the end the entire Bonny community resolved that the Ibanise Kuburi, which is the highest decision-making body of the Bonny Kingdom, comprising all leaders of families in Bonny, should meet, and called for a meeting with the officials of the NLNG. This invitation was ignored. This went on for two days so an agreement was reached by the community that the entire Bonny people should move to the LNG location in a procession, wearing white ‘esibo’ (jumper) and wrapper. We chose white because it symbolizes peace.”

- October/November, 1998

HYDROCARBON POLLUTION AT SANTA BARBARA

A faulty high-pressure pipeline operated by Shell Petroleum Development Company damaged the environment of the Nembe Local Government Area of Bayelsa State and beyond...

- January 1998

IDOHO PLATFORM: MOTHER OF ALL POLLUTIONS

As the following report shows, Mobil Producing Unlimited is another key player in environmental rights’ violations in the Niger Delta region. How did the company respond to the spill from its facilities at Idoho in Akwa Ibom State?

On January 11, 1998 the largest oil spill in recent times polluted the creeks and estuaries of the Niger Delta. The worst affected were the Qua Iboe River in Akwa Ibom State; the Andoni, Imo and Bonny rivers in Rivers State; and Brass, Bennington and Akpoi rivers in Bayelsa State. The pollution even spread as far as Forcados and Ramos in Delta State and a thick sludge of crude oil came within five kilometers of Lagos Lagoon.

The problem started with the rupture of a 12-inch pipeline at the Idoho platform linked to the Qua Iboe Terminal owned by Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited about 13 miles offshore. The Platform produces 100,000 barrels of crude oil per day; the quantity of oil spilled was estimated by Mobil to be 40,000 barrels. In reprisal, the Ibeno and Eket communities stopped Mobil’s operations for three days.

- June, 1999

SHELL IN OLEH: A LITANY OF ECOLOGICAL ASSAULTS AGAINST THE OLEH PEOPLE

Shell fails to adequately maintain its facilities in the Niger Delta. It engages in indiscriminate digging of burrow pits, and applies its divide-and-rule strategies. These methods have enabled the oil giant to penetrate and destabilize political formations in the area. However, it makes recourse to explaining its acts of negligence resulting in environmental disasters as sabotage...

- September, 1999

INFERNO AT EKAKPAMRE

A disaster of unusual magnitude visited the sleepy farming and fishing community of Delta State, courtesy of Shell...

Before September 18, 1999 Ekakpamre was an anonymous village in the oil-rich Niger Delta. The people engaged mostly in fishing and farming. They cultivated yams, plantains, leafy green vegetables and other farm produce like palm oil. Rubber and other economic trees are also grown. The women were mostly traders and potters but they also engaged in the production of local gin known as *kaikai*. They have lived in the area for centuries, carrying on these occupations like their ancestors before them, their lifestyle hardly affected by the seemingly inexhaustible wealth that has issued from their soil for almost half-a-century.

But all that changed on September 18, 1999. One villager said: "I woke up and saw everywhere alight, a bright yellow glow with thick black smoke everywhere. I thought the next house was burning. I grabbed my baby and ran. I did not know where I was running to. My baby was choking and I thought she was dying but I did not stop running. I ran and ran until I could not run any more then I stopped and saw other people. Later in the day, when we heard that they had put the fire out, we came back; I took my baby who was now very, very sick to the hospital. They brought out thick black matter from her nostrils, which had nearly choked her. She had been sick since then. Still, I thank God for sparing our lives."

As we can see, the frequent oil spills, gas flaring, criss-crossing high pressure pipelines, discharge of refinery effluents into water sources, badly constructed canals or canals that let sea salt water into the fresh waters of the Niger Delta and other environment degrading activities have had great negative impact on the peoples and ecosystems of the Niger Delta. In a recent study, Agbola and Olurin (2003:8) report that major land-use and land-cover changes have occurred in the Niger Delta as a result of petroleum and gas exploitation activities. The study revealed that, "there has been significant changes in land-use and land-cover in Rivers, Cross-River, Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Edo and Imo States of the Niger Delta region," and that, "the total land area for fresh water swap," has been falling in all the states of the Niger Delta. Other consequences impacted upon by change in land-use and land-cover are, "the degradation of the environment (air, water and land resources); loss of biodiversity; habitat fragmentation and loss; as well as climate change" (Agbola and Olurin, 2003:9).

8.4. Intra- and inter-communal conflicts and wars

Arising from the policies of divide and rule of the Nigerian state and the oil companies, the communities of the Niger Delta are frequently engaged in intra- and inter-communal wars whose ferocity and viciousness have no match in Nigerian history. The fallouts of the ethnic war between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, which started in March 1997, are succinctly documented in the 1997 CDHR Annual Report on the human rights Situation in Nigeria. The war started as a result of the double standards deliberately employed by the Federal Government in the siting of local government headquarters. The CDHR Report (1997:139) documents that:

...Following the outbreak of hostilities, several villages were sacked while properties worth several millions of Naira were wantonly destroyed. The dexterity with which the war was prosecuted, was to say the least, amazing. Sophisticated weapons, including grenades were freely employed. Mercenaries were recruited to train youths in the art of handling these weapons of modern warfare... Months later when the war subsided, over one thousand people, including four policemen, were reportedly killed while about 3,000 others sustained injuries. Several other people simply disappeared with a trace...

Intra- and inter- ethnic wars have greatly festered the air of suspicion and lack of trust among several of the communities in the Niger Delta. This situation poses a

significant challenge to and thus needs to be taken into account in any plans for poverty eradication in the Niger Delta.

9. Protest and Resistance by the Peoples of the Niger Delta

In response to the combined repression by the state and the oil companies, the communities of the Niger Delta have been and are still involved in several forms of resistance: demonstrations and protests, petition writing, legal action, hostage taking, armed uprising and community mobilisation. There is no doubt that the Nigerian state and the transnational oil conglomerates operating in the Niger Delta have made efforts to confuse these various forms of protest of the Niger Delta communities with the generalised state of intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts and wars in the area. It needs however to be stressed that the various forms of resistance and protest are qualitatively different from the intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts. The protests and resistance are directed against the Nigerian state and its collaborators in the Niger Delta and have had the objective of drawing attention to and reversing the situation of exploitation and underdevelopment.

These protests began well before flag independence in 1960. For example, the Willink Commission of 1957/1958 was set up by the colonial government following petitions from the Ijaw and Itsekiri communities, which presented the 'special problems' of the area and the fears of the people about marginalisation. By 1966, Isaac Adaka Boro had raised the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, which organised an armed uprising against the Nigerian state. A major development in the struggle against the underdevelopment of the area has been the emergence of the Ogoni nationality movement, the Ijaw Youth Congress and several other movements in the area. Led by the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni nationality movement conducted its struggle under the Ogoni Bill of Rights. The Ogoni Bill of Rights subsequently inspired the Ijaw nationality organisations to produce and launch the Kaiama Declaration. Both the Bill of Rights and the Kaiama Declaration have served as a major basis for mobilising broad sections of the Niger Delta communities against the systematic underdevelopment of the area and its peoples. They have also functioned as a basis for drawing attention of the international community to the 'rape' going on in the Niger Delta. As it is well known, Ken Saro-Wiwa and several leaders of the Ogoni Nationality Movement were first detained and then murdered in cold blood in 1998 by the Nigerian state with the support of the transnational oil conglomerates. Nevertheless, agitations have increased, rather than reduce in the Niger Delta. The substance of these agitations needs to form the core component of any framework aimed at addressing the underdevelopment problem in the Niger Delta.

The situation of generalised repression of the Niger Delta people by the combined forces of the Nigerian neo-colonial state and the multinational oil companies and the corresponding resistance of the communities in the Niger Delta means that the area has been in state of war since the late fifties when oil was discovered in commercial quantities at Oloibiri. It needs no argument to say that development and war cannot go hand in hand; for this reason, those committed to development often have to act to bring wars to an end before they can introduce their development initiatives. This has been irrespective of the fact that sometimes, war has been waged or needs to be waged as part of or, indeed, the very first step towards making genuine development possible.

10. The Development Framework of the Nigerian State for the Niger Delta

As we indicated at the beginning, every Nigerian government claims to have taken special measures to develop the Niger Delta. This claim can be justified on two grounds. The first is that the Nigerian state and the oil companies generally do not make any difference between the garrisoning agenda and their strategies for development. When communities revolt against some method or consequence of oil exploitation, the response of the state has usually been to warn the communities that they are placing efforts to 'develop them' in serious jeopardy. In this sense therefore, it amounts to hair splitting to separate the development initiatives of the Nigerian state from the methods that it has sanctioned for oil exploitation in the Niger Delta. The second ground is that the Nigerian state, the oil companies and the multilateral capitalist institutions frequently point to a number of development activities that they are involved in for the 'development' of the Niger Delta. To the extent that such activities have actually been historically documented, it makes sense to discuss these efforts and to examine how effective they have been.

In general, a number of distinct activities can be recognised in the 'development initiatives' undertaken by the Nigerian state and the domestic and transnational oil companies to develop the Niger Delta over the period. These 'initiatives' may be classified into a number of approaches:

- The projects approach (undertaking such projects as building hospitals, schools, etc);
- The agency approach (establishing development agencies such as NDE, OMPADEC and NDDC);
- The financial approach (giving cash as bribes or block cash grants as in the Revenue Derivation Formula);
- The empowerment approach (creation of local governments, states and geopolitical zones);
- The rule making approach (enunciating national policies as in the National Policy on Poverty Eradication, making laws and regulations for the 'development' of the area).

While the oil companies have adopted the projects and financial approaches (providing clinics, generating sets and giving bribes to some local community leaders), the Nigerian state has adopted all the approaches, more or less, sequentially. However the financial, agency and rule making approaches have tended to form the major planks of government's development and poverty reduction initiatives in the Niger Delta. For these reasons, we will focus attention on the establishment of special agencies of development, the continuous revisions in the revenue allocation formula and the adoption of the National Policy on Poverty Eradication for the purpose of evaluating the degree to which government's initiatives have addressed the key poverty issues in the Niger Delta.

10.1. Special Agencies for Development

In the creation of special agencies for development, three such state agencies stand out. These are the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

The Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB)

One of the very first special agencies set up by government for the development of the Niger Delta was the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), which was set up as a result of the recommendations of the Willink Commission in 1958. It is generally agreed that the Willink Commission, which was set up in September 1957, was in response to the fears expressed by the Ijaws and other ethnic groups in the Niger Delta about their neglect and marginalisation in the Nigerian project that was then being canvassed by the ruling elites from the majority ethnic groups in the country. It is also on record that the members of the Willink's Commission confessed that:

We were impressed, in both the Western and Eastern regions, with the special position of the people, mainly Ijaw, in the swampy country along the coast between Opobo and the mouth of the Benin River. We were confronted, first, with their own almost universal view that their difficulties were not understood at headquarters in the interior, where those responsible thought of the problems in quite different physical forms from those they assumed in those riverine areas; secondly, with the widespread desire of the Ijaws on either side of the main stream of the Niger to be united. We cannot recommend political arrangements which would unite in one political unit the whole body of Ijaws; we do, however, consider that their belief that their problems are not understood could be largely met without creation of a separate state which we have rejected for the reasons mentioned elsewhere.

The main reasons for rejecting the creation of a separate state were that the state would be unviable economically because it lacked resources and because of the region's harsh terrain! Although impressed with the facts, the Willink Commission went ahead to recommend the establishment of a Federal Board. This recommendation was incorporated into the 1960 Constitution, which specifically provided for the establishment of NDDDB as follows:

1. There shall be for the Niger Delta a board, which shall be styled the Niger Delta Development Board.
2. The members of the Niger Delta Development Board shall be:
 - a. a person appointed by the Governor-General of the Federation of Nigeria, who shall be chairman;
 - b. a person appointed by the Governor of Western Nigeria;
 - c. a person appointed by the Governor of eastern Nigeria; and
 - d. such other persons as may be appointed in such manner as may be prescribed by the Parliament of the Federation of Nigeria to represent the inhabitants of the Niger Delta.
3. A member of the Niger Delta Development Board shall vacate his office in such circumstances as may be prescribed by the Parliament of the Federation of Nigeria.
4. The Niger Delta Development Board shall be responsible for advising the Government of the Federation of Nigeria and the governments of Western Nigeria and Eastern Nigeria

with respect to the physical development of the Niger Delta, and in order to discharge that responsibility the Board shall:

- a. cause the Niger Delta to be surveyed in order to ascertain what measures are required to promote its physical development;
- b. prepare schemes designed to promote the physical development of the Niger-Delta, together with estimates of the costs of putting such schemes into effect;
- c. submit to the Government of the Federation and the Governments of Western Nigeria and Eastern Nigeria an initial report describing the survey of the Niger-Delta and the measures that appear to the Board to be desirable in order to promote the physical development thereof, having regard to the information derived from the survey, and subsequent annual reports describing the work of the Board and the measures taken in pursuance of its advice.

While the 1960 Constitution provided for the setting up of the NDDDB, it nevertheless ensured that the NDDDB functioned in advisory capacity. The NDDDB was to survey the Niger Delta and advise the government, which would then decide whether or not to act on the advice. The real powers to cause the development of the Niger Delta thus resided in the same political forces that had no interest in developing the Niger Delta. It is not surprising that the NDDDB was not provided with the funds to fulfil even the advisory role it had been granted under the 1960 Constitution. Horsfall's (2000:38) assessment of the performance of NDDDB is highly relevant in this regard:

It turned out that the creation of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) following the report of the Willink Commission was a half-hearted attempt to scratch the problem on the surface. The Board was given series of 'instructions', rather than powers, to merely investigate development possibilities, make plans and then to recommend. It had no funds, nor powers to execute anything. From its beginning it never enjoyed the full co-operation or support of one or another of the governments to which it was to report its findings and from which it should have, naturally, expected to draw patronage. Rather, it received open or sub-terrainian political hostility from those who should have fostered its activities. In the end it was dealt a crippling political blow when, in 1976 ten other River Basin Development authorities were created by the Federal Government and the eleventh, the former NDDDB, now styled Niger Delta River Basin Authority (NDRBA) was reduced in status and in resources compared to the other ten. By its lower funding and grading it was naturally reduced to a second rate non-effective development organ. In the end the NDDDB, which was founded on some vision but without executive powers had been sabotaged and then politically destroyed.

Horsfall's account is an eloquent summary of the extent to which the NDDDB contributed to the development of the Niger Delta; in effect, it made no impact upon the special and general development needs of the area.

The Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC)

Following the 'destruction' of the NDDDB, the next major development in the establishment of special agencies for the development of the Niger Delta was the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). We have already recounted how the OMPADEC arose as a consequence of the efforts to modify the pacification and garrisoning agenda for the Niger Delta. In essence, OMPADEC arose out of the 'jottings' that Horsfall (2000:39), former head of the National Security Organisation (NSO), made for General Babangida. According to Horsfall (2000:39) these jottings were, "passed to the then Attorney General of the Federation Sir Clement Akpangbo (SAN). The OMPADEC decree seems to have developed from these jottings submitted to the Attorney General."

Horsfall's account eloquently indicates not only that the creation of development commissions may be motivated by reasons far removed from attending to the development needs of communities and regions but also that they may be essentially ad hoc reactions to emergent demands. Clearly, no detailed planning was involved in the decision to create OMPADEC as it arose from the jottings of the head of a security organisation for a head of state committed to satisfying the interests of the top officials of transnational oil companies. It is therefore not surprising that Horsfall (2000) goes on to document that, like the NDDDB before it, OMPADEC was equally sabotaged:

This realisation soon moved me to the further appreciation that the prejudices and intrigues which had destroyed the Niger Delta Development Board and various other attempts to develop these territories were still prevalent. I discovered that this time around the spear-head to thwart my attempt to develop the Niger Delta special areas was an amorphous Mafia made up of individuals within and outside the establishment who were strictly opposed to the development of Niger Delta areas which had meanwhile become awash with crude petroleum and natural gas. Their grouse or fear was that a developed and economically empowered Niger Delta population will be 'liberated' enough not to accept the political and economic exploitation of the area which every ruling class in Nigeria had asserted over the area in order to sustain their political and economic power! How wrong these small minds are, for the contrary might have been the case. Contrary to the time when Willink felt they could not receive political autonomy due to its non-economic viability these territories had now become so rich with natural resources, petroleum and gas, that it was now providing 80-90% of Nigerian foreign reserves. That endowment had attracted the attention of some political power seekers, in this case associated with the mafia which straddles various parts of the country, north and south, to swear against the development of these areas lest the elements represented by the Mafia lose their purported control over the area. Consequently my attempts and determination to develop these areas from the 3% oil revenue accorded to OMPADEC by the enabling decree ran contrary to the aspirations of these monstrous elements...

Consequently and as publicly stated in the media and other authoritative public statements, all the plans, projects, projections and human physical developments commenced, continued and progressed to various stages by the Board of the Commission over the three years of its existence were halted, vandalized or diverted, and until Professor Aluko's National Economic Intelligence Committee blocked it, all subsequent funds accruing to the commission after my Board was removed from office were deliberately siphoned to other uses or squandered. All through the three years of my tenure as chairman of OMPADEC one argument raged between the Commission and its detractors. At issue was the ideal of REAL or cosmetised development of the oil producing communities. The proponents of cosmetised development intended for propaganda and political sophistry were obviously of the misconceived or sometimes mischievous view that short-term minor projects – bore holes for water and generator borne localized electricity, construction of classroom blocks, and temporary localized infrastructures accompanied by a heavy dose of propaganda of Government funding, and performance was what needed to persuade the communities and the public at large of government patronage and performance.

Horsfall documents that the sabotage of OMPADEC took several forms. The most prominent was starving the commission of approved funds (Table 4). Thus between 1992 and 1996, the commission received less than 12% of the funds due to it from the 3% derivation fund. Whereas the commission was allocated about ₦86.4 billion for the period, it actually received ₦10.9 billion.

Table 5 Disbursements from the Federation Account to OMPADEC (1992 –1996)

Million ₦ (NGN)	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
1. Expected allocation to OMPADEC	6,041.54	6,413.36	6,621.321	27,826.870	38,586.48
2. Actual allocation to OMPADEC	1,614.09	2,618.85	3,215.370	3,215.370	3,077.14
3. Allocation shortfall to OMPADEC	4,427.45	3,794.51	3,405.951	24,611.500	35,509.34

Source: Horsfall (2000:53)

This fact is important when placed side by side with the record of oil funds released to the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) under the Abacha regime. These records indicate that the PTF received around ₦347.00 billion in less than five years of Abacha's rule. This fact is significant because it reflects in a most dramatic manner the paradox of underdevelopment; where as Rodney has noted, underdevelopment not only 'expresses a particular relationship of exploitation' but also where the exploited and underdeveloped attain and retain that status because their resources are taken over and used by those who exploited them and, as a result, become developed.

Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)

Following the ‘sabotage of OMPADEC’, the agitations of the peoples of the Niger Delta again forced the Nigerian state to create the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000. After more than three years of its existence, allegations are already being made that funds due to the NDDC are being withheld by the parties that should statutorily fund it (Guardian, Thursday, 12th February, 2004). Moreover, the controversy that surrounded the establishment of NDDC and the legal debate over the definition of the boundaries of the littoral states indicates that NDDC may fail to meet the development challenges of the Niger Delta. Finally, there has even been a suggestion made by President Obasanjo that the commission may be scrapped. Indeed, in a paid advertorial in the Vanguard Newspapers of March 15, 2004, the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) publicly expressed these concerns. The concerns of IYC are so central to the issue of the role of development agencies in the Niger Delta that they are reproduced in some detail. The IYC, made up of forty seven youth organisations averred that:

(Since the) Henry Willink’s Minority Commission Report of 1957, there have been several intervention agencies created by the Federal Government for the Niger Delta Region. Such agencies include: Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDRBDA), Task Force on Oil Mineral Producing Areas, 1.5% Derivation fund, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and of recent the Niger Delta Development Commission, (NDDC).

- (a) From time immemorial, because we had suspicion on the activities of the Federal government as regards our future; we have been consistently protesting the unwholesome and harmfully parasitic relationship between the Nigerian State and the Ijaw Nation. Despite our protestations and our demand for political autonomy within the framework of Nigeria, the creation of lame duck interventionist agencies has been a recurrent decimal.
- (b) It was also observed that after the creation of these agencies, the Federal Authorities adopt maneuvers with the sole objective of killing the agencies. This had been the sole reason why none of these agencies has been able to impact on the Niger region for a period of over 40 years of political independence.
- (c) We further observed that Mr. President’s outburst on the NDDC in Port Harcourt a fortnight ago, and the rumoured scrapping of the NDDC is a familiar gimmick by previous rulers whenever they wish, to kill such agencies as the proposed stakeholders meeting.
- (d) It should be observed that, Mr. President’s unwillingness to abide by the provisions of the enabling Act in effecting release of funds to the commission is clearly a demonstration of the insensitivity of the Nigerian state to the Niger Delta question. This has led to acute under funding of the NDDC, a situation that would portray the Board as under performer.
- (e) In the history development of the Niger Delta, it has become fashionable for individuals and groups who fail to get the agencies to do their bidding to engage in petition writing and campaigns of calumny. To contemplate scrapping of the NDDC on the basis of petitions by self-seeking groups is clearly an assault on the collective sensibilities of the Niger Delta people.
- (f) Plenary session observed that the 13% derivation funds accruing to the Niger Delta states and the NDDC constitute the common wealth of the Niger Delta, although we observe with dismay and sadness the lack of accountability, transparency and prudence on the management of the derivation funds. Such funds must not be a direct substitute to the NDDC as might be erroneously conceived by Mr. President.

- (g) Evidence abounds that a number of oil companies have deliberately refused to contribute their quota to the funding of the Commission as stipulated by the Enabling Acts.

RESOLUTIONS:

Sequel to the above observations, Plenary session unanimously adopted a Seven (7) Points resolution.

1. Arising from (the above) observations, plenary session resolved that the NDDC shall be the last imposed development agency for the Niger Delta region by the Federal Government. That at the extinction of the NDDC, we shall be left with no option than to proclaim our separate state from Nigeria because the Federal government lacks the political and administrative will to address the development issues confronting the people of the Niger Delta.

These observations and the records of history, suggest that the NDDC will inevitably suffer the same fate as its predecessors.

This analysis of the role of special agencies in the development of the Niger Delta indicates that the special agencies made no impact upon the development of the area. The reasons for their ineffectiveness are several and some of them have been eloquently captured by Horsfall (2000). However, there are three additional factors that are of special significance. The first of the three factors is that the agencies and their programmes are contrived without the participation of the genuine representatives and leaders of the Niger Delta people. Horsfall (2000) reveals for example that:

Being subjected to such prolonged neglected and political and economic underdevelopment the peoples of these areas have clearly become underprivileged, and in most cases frustrated, lacking in confidence, in opportunities and especially physical, economic and social development. My job as Chairman of OMPADEC was to attempt to develop the area physically and economically. **I soon realized that the task included a responsibility to give political motivation and leadership in order to prepare the minds of the indigenes of the area to absorb the physical and economic development I had drawn up for them** (emphasis, ours).

In effect, Horsfall undertook by himself the responsibility of drawing up a plan for the physical and economic development of the Niger Delta without even the courtesy of consulting the peoples of the Niger Delta. By being handpicked by General Babangida rather than being elected by the people of the Niger Delta as their representative, this former head of Nigeria's most ruthless security agency, the NSO, immediately assumed the role of the political leader of the people of the Niger Delta who had to prepare the minds of the 'natives' to absorb the impact of the physical and economic development plans that he had drawn up for them!

The second reason why the agency approach has proved to be ineffective is that the agencies worked under the 'basic amenities' understanding of development and poverty. Thus the programmes of NDDDB, OMPADEC and NDDC focused attention on conducting surveys, building community centres, sinking boreholes, providing generators, and in exceptional cases, tarring roads. Most of these programmes could not and did not address the core development issues, which are of a political nature, in the Niger Delta. It is true that between 1960 and 1996, new states and local governments were created in the Niger Delta. It is also true however, that in many of these cases, decisions on the creation of some states and local governments, including the naming and location of headquarters for the new administrative and political

units were made to 'spite' rather than bring respite to the Niger Delta communities. The ferocious war between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri, which continues till today and shows no sign of abating, began as a direct consequence of these decisions. Overall, the agency approach did not address the key issues of true federalism, resource control, ecological disasters, the legal regime and methods of oil extraction, the garrisoning agenda, and ending the bitter conflicts between and within the communities. More importantly, it fitted into the primitive accumulation strategies of members of Nigeria's ruling class since the various boards and commissions provided avenues for massive corruption through the award of contracts at highly inflated prices or direct theft of budgeted funds (Iyayi, 1983).

The third reason is that, in any event, neither the agencies nor those who established them were interested in coming to terms with the core development and human poverty reduction issues in the Niger Delta: the issues of injustice, rapacious exploitation and war against the people of the Niger Delta. And it could not have been otherwise: those establishing the agencies were the ones in the position to profit the most from the continuation of the policies and programmes that created underdevelopment, abject and mass poverty in the Niger Delta in the first place.

10.2. Allocating Oil revenue to the Niger Delta

As has been noted, one of the reasons why the Willink Commission rejected the idea of a state of the Niger Delta was the fact that it considered the area economically unviable. With the discovery of huge quantities of crude oil and gas in the region, the struggle now shifted to how the huge revenues flowing from the resource could be used for 'development'. All of a sudden, the revenue sharing formula established in the early sixties changed. The data provided below (Table 5) is indicative of the change.

Table 6: Federal – State Percentage share in Petroleum Proceeds (1960- 2002)

Years	Producing State	Federal Government	Distribution Pool
1960 – 67	50%	20%	30%
1967 – 69	50%	50%	-
1969 – 71	45%	55%	-
1971 – 75	45% minus off-shore proceeds	55% plus off-shore proceeds	-
1975 – 79	20% minus off-shore proceeds	80% plus off-shore proceeds	-
1979 – 81	-	100%	-
1982 – 92	1.5% minus off-shore proceeds	98.5% plus off-shore proceed	-
1992 – 99	3% minus off-shore proceeds	97% plus off-shore	-
1999 –	13% minus off-shore proceeds	87% plus off-shore proceeds	-

Source: Sagay (2000)

Sagay (2000) has analysed the underlying dynamic of the change in revenue allocation over the years in the following words:

...Even a superficial political analysis of the situation, will reveal that the fate of the mineral resources of the Niger-Delta minorities, particularly the trend from derivation to Federal Government absolutism, is itself a function of majority control of the Federal Government apparatus. In 1960, there were no petroleum resources of any significance. The main income earning exports were cocoa (Yoruba, West) groundnuts, cotton, and hides and skin (Hausa/Fulani, North) and palm oil (Ibo, East). Therefore, it was convenient for these majority groups usually in control of the Federal Government to emphasise derivation, hence its strong showing in the 1960/63 Constitutions. However, by 1967 and certainly by 1969, petroleum, particularly the mineral oil, was becoming the major resource in terms of total income and foreign exchange earnings in the country. It was, therefore, not difficulty for the majority groups in the Federal Government to reverse the basis of revenue allocation with regard to petroleum resources from derivations to Federal Government exclusive ownership. There were in control of the Federal Government and their control of the mineral resources by virtue of that fact effectively means that the resources of the Niger Delta were being transferred to the majority group in control of the Federal Government at any point in time. Again, these oppressive measures are not the results of accidents or errors; they are deliberate acts of policy implementation founded in the belief that the owners of the petroleum resources being minorities can be deprived of their resources without any consequence. This is the attitude and mentality that led a senior Federal Permanent Secretary in a memorandum concerning federal expropriation of the resources of the Niger Delta to make the following Freudian slip, some years ago: 'Given however the small size and population of oil producing areas, it is not cynical to observe that even if the resentments of the oil producing states continued, they cannot threaten the stability of the country, nor affect its continued development'.

The importance of this statement is not simply that Federal Permanent Secretary in question is from the Niger Delta but that it reflects the coincidence of interests between members of Nigeria's ruling class from within and outside the Niger Delta. In general however, the paltry allocations to the Niger Delta and the manner of appropriating the allocated funds have meant that they could not make any substantial impact upon the people of the area. Much more importantly, the fundamental principle over the years became how to strengthen the relations of injustice and exploitation upon which the oil revenue allocation formula was founded. In the end, more injustice increased, rather than reduced under-development, ecological devastation, war, death and poverty in the Niger Delta.

10.3. The National Policy on Poverty Eradication

In response to the demands of the World Bank and IMF the Nigerian government has proposed a National Policy on Poverty Eradication (NNPE) and an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) which are meant to address poverty in Nigeria in general and, it is hoped, the Niger Delta in particular. The strategies enunciated in the NPPE and IPRSP are broad, macroscopic and cover all the sectors of the Nigerian economy: agriculture, health, education, industry and infrastructures. These strategies are to be made specific through the involvement of all levels of government as well as community organisations, civil society organisations and private sector organisations. The entire effort is to be coordinated from the office of the President of the Federation who is designated Chairman of the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC). Each state and local government in the federation are expected to replicate the organisational structure at the national level and thus ensure that poverty reduction has the support of the people themselves. In design, the poverty eradication policy appears to have gone further than any other instruments fashioned by the Nigerian state for poverty reduction and by implication, the development of

the country Delta because it envisages a role for the community of the poor. Indeed, the poverty eradication programme has been incorporated into the NEEDS, SEEDS and LEEDS frameworks which are the macro – economic development strategies at the federal, state and local government levels of governance in Nigeria.

There are several weaknesses however in the IPRSP, and by implication, in the NEEDS strategy. One of these is that they are externally driven: they arose as a result of the promptings of the World Bank. Thus the Nigerian state has no emotional investment in the policy. The second major flaw, especially as it relates to IPRSP is that it is just what it claims to be – a policy. This means that it is simply a guide to action, rather than the action itself. Experience shows that all too often, there is always a large gap between policy intentions and actual action on the part of the Nigerian state. This is what the agency approach to the development of the Niger Delta eloquently demonstrates. Indeed, to gauge whether the IPRSP will make any impact on development and poverty in the Niger Delta it is necessary to examine the attitudes of the wielders of state power, the authors of both NPPE and IPRSP, to development, peace and dialogue in the Niger Delta. The attempts by the Nigerian state to criminalise the reactions of Niger Delta communities and organisations to state violence in the Niger Delta is a significant part of these attitudes. *Blood Trail*, a CLO's publication, has also graphically captured other aspects of these attitudes in the following words:

... When the military handed over to the democratically-elected government of President Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29, 1999 hopes were initially raised that justice and equity would be delivered to the peoples of the Niger Delta. During his election campaign, Obasanjo had promised to resolve the problem once and for all and even dialogued with disaffected youths in Benin and Warri. The people believed him and voted massively for his party, which swept all the oil-producing states. Shortly before his assumption of power, he held secret talks with Ijaw and Ogoni leaders in Aso Rock brokered by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the out-going military Head of State. Sources privy to those talks say that the president-elect betrayed the impatience and aggression that came to characterize his administration. He was rude and dismissive; he assumed the attitude of a messiah who knew it all. None of the meetings lasted more than five minutes and, to the chagrin of General Abubakar, all of them ended with insults. Ledum Mitee, who succeeded Ken Saro-Wiwa as leader of the movement for the survival of the Ogoni People, expressed his frustration with the Presidents style: 'I went away believing that our struggle has just started. I was disappointed. I thought here was a chance to dialogue, to give Obasanjo first-hand information because sycophants and all kinds of advisers move in. I thought here was a chance to resolve the Niger Delta problem peacefully. I was wrong. The President was not with us; he had all the solutions.' Mitee was right. Shortly after he was sworn in, Obasanjo met with the youths in Port Harcourt, the oil capital. The meeting was a fiasco. At one point, he openly wrested the microphone from Orono Douglas, a youth leader. Government officials from the Niger Delta who have held meetings with him to find a peaceful way out of the quagmire have recounted similar incidents: 'You did not elect me. God elected me' he told the startled Governor of Rivers State, Dr. Peter Odili, in the course of a state banquet.

The wielders of state power who are rude, dismissive, assume the attitude of messiahs, believe that they know it all and are appointed by God cannot be expected to deliver on the hopes raised, at the instance of their foreign masters, in a policy paper on poverty eradication in Nigeria, let alone in a part of the country where the people are viewed as criminals. The only conclusion that can be made in the circumstances is that although they look quite impressive on paper, the NPPE and IPRSP will fail woefully to address the real and core issues that are at the heart of the

development problem in the Niger Delta: the issues of injustice, political repression, rapacious exploitation and war.

As can be seen, the various attempts by the Nigerian state and the transnational oil companies at developing the Niger Delta suffer from several major weaknesses. First, they seek to present the Niger Delta problem as largely economic in character. In doing this, they seek deliberately to deny the fundamental character of the problem: namely that it is one of underdevelopment and hence devolves on a relationship and process that are based upon unjust political, economic and social relations. Secondly, even the adopted economic solutions are at best not sincere and at worst, constructed to maintain the status quo. This explains the deliberate subversion of the development programmes by the very state officials who approve them. Thirdly, it is also clear that there is no clear pattern to the process of development in the adopted programmes. What activities occur are disjointed and usually have an emergency character. More often than not, they are varied responses to intense agitations by the people of the Niger Delta. The responses are thus abandoned as soon as the agitations die or are put down. Fourthly, they are usually commandist in nature. They are the ideas of those who are responsible for the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta, rather than those of the underdeveloped people themselves. Attempts are often made to incorporate and co-opt certain sections and levels of the elite of the Niger Delta into the decision making process. But these attempts and their results in terms of the nature of the elements co-opted usually further undermine in a fundamental sense the past and current achievements of those forces that are genuinely committed to the resolution of the underdevelopment problem in the Niger Delta. In essence, the strategy of cooptation serves to reinforce and maintain the underdeveloped status of the Niger Delta.

11. Other Views on the Alternative Framework for developing the Niger Delta

Beyond the views of the Nigerian state and its collaborating oil companies, there are other views on what should constitute the alternative framework for developing the Niger Delta. These views usually represent those external agencies and institutions outside Nigeria before which all the interests involved in the Niger Delta have had to plead their cause at one time or another. Notable among such agencies and institutions are the World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations and even some Western governments, especially the European Union and the United States of America. These institutions and governments have variously expressed concern and for quite different motives in the situation in the Niger Delta. In general, it is correct to say that these agencies have interpreted the Niger Delta problem as a poverty problem and not as a political problem. For this reason, the institutions are generally in agreement that what the Niger Delta needs for its development is the further penetration of the local economies by capitalist production relations. The poverty reduction strategy papers, which the Nigerian state has been forced to produce, is one outcome of this agreement. Another outcome of this agreement is the strategy of providing micro-projects and micro-credits to the poor in rural communities of the Niger Delta. The idea is that granting micro-credits usually within the range of ₦5,000.00 to about ₦20,000.00 to individuals to start them off on some small scale business will attack poverty and spur development. It is also believed that the process

will not only draw large numbers of rural people into profit making activities but also more importantly that it will empower rural people economically.

The Commission of the European Communities is a good example of this thinking and approach to the solution of the underdevelopment problem in the Niger Delta. Indeed, the EU has not only been very active in the Niger Delta, it also claims to be linked to the development efforts of the World Bank in the area. Its development framework in the Niger Delta is the Micro Projects Programme in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States. Code named MPP3, the framework justifies its approach by acknowledging the paradox of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta: "...ironically, though the Niger Delta generates the bulk of revenues of the Nigerian Government that derive from the production of crude oil, several of the communities within that region are among the most underdeveloped and poorest in the country of Nigeria." To address this irony, the,

European Community and the newly-formed civilian government designed and agreed upon a 'quick start' package, which among other elements, includes provisions for 'micro-projects' in the Niger Delta... MPP3 is a Social Development Programme funded by the Commission of European Communities in cooperation with the Local Communities, Local Government Authorities and national NGOs and CBOs. The overarching goal of MPP3 is to alleviate the living conditions of the poor... Special attention will be given to establishing management structures and the ability to maintain repair and replace installations within the capacity of the community. Where reliable partners, among the few that are operational in the region, can be identified, project follow-up will be delegated to them, so not directly employed project staff will carry out the follow up. Initially, it is thought that approximately 5,000 micro-projects will be identified and with emphasis on the general conditions of women's involvement and local participation realised as a function of this program – largely in the sectors of water supply, local transport, health systems, income generating activities and micro-credit schemes. In addition, there will be capacity building among the local organisations and an increase in the skills and technical knowledge of local craftsmen and contractors. MPP3 views the micro-projects as tools to enhance the capabilities of the communities to undertake and sustain the development process themselves.

Earlier, the EU document states that the, "the overall objective is to help improve living standards in poor settlements of the Niger Delta. The programme thus contributes to the reduction of poverty, social tensions and crisis."

The approach of the EU is based upon five assumptions. The first is 'Participation Approach towards Development'. This assumption holds that for development to 'have a lasting and sustainable impact, it will require the full participation of the beneficiaries'. The second assumption is 'Money and Relative Poverty of Certain Target Groups'. This assumption suggests that it is the 'psychosocial reality' of a region: "the attitude towards money and the difference this money generates in between communities," that leads to certain community choices. Thus attitudes towards money are more important than the real indices of poverty. The third assumption is the 'Conflict and Post-conflict Rehabilitation Approach towards Development' which posits that an, "important part of sustainable reconstruction is the prevention of reappearance or revival of the conflict," because conflict and all forms of violence represent lost development opportunities. Societies that are war thorn and break down, "cannot grow, redistribute, decentralize, invest and move forward". The fourth assumption is that micro-projects as the vehicle for development and poverty alleviation in the Niger Delta will be realised through grants that require the communities to also contribute. The fifth and final assumption is the cash provided as grants must not flow to the 'Benefit Captor' – the individual or

group presenting itself as ‘the most important stakeholder’ because, “with all the relief that came by oil companies towards the Niger Delta, it became very clear that very often only some individuals (benefit captors),” profited from the aid.

The EU MPP3 targets different categories of micro-projects. The first category is the village based micro-project which will be community owned. The second category is the micro credit scheme, which targets small-scale businesses owned by individuals. The third category is capacity building and training.

While micro projects, micro-credits and capacity building may have some palliative value for the situation in the Niger Delta, the approach of the EU and other external interests that have claimed to be concerned about the paradox of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta can and needs to be interrogated on at least three grounds. The first is the idea that micro-credits will alleviate poverty and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. The second is that local communities must be empowered and therefore participate in defining and prioritising the developmental issues to be addressed. The third is what the approach leaves unsaid: that the problem is an economic rather than a political problem and hence, an economic and a social problem. Let us start with the issue of micro-credits.

There is no doubt that micro-credits do provide some temporary relief to the poor and that it does draw them into the system of market relationships more effectively. But the strategy has a number of serious limitations. First, micro-credits are targeted at individuals rather than communities. While the idea may be that individual wealth will lead to community wealth, history and experience show that this has not happened in Nigeria. What indeed tends to happen is for wealth accumulation by individuals to lead to further social stratification of local communities into the poor and not poor. Furthermore, many of the problems that sustain underdevelopment in the Niger Delta are social in nature and are thus not addressed by the individualism that micro-credits seek to foster. Another major shortcoming of the micro-credits approach is that its scope, in terms of the amount of support provided and the impact created, is also micro in character. Many recipients of micro-credits have thus failed to realise the expected spur to prosperity that they promise. An ongoing survey into the scheme shows that the majority of the small-scale businesses financed through micro-credits in parts of the Niger Delta have failed. The failure of such schemes has further consequences for loan recipients. It draws them into further poverty and even lessens their sense of self-esteem. A final point about micro-credits is that they are economic solutions to political and social problems.

The second issue is that of empowerment of local communities. Over the last few years, the idea of empowerment has developed or become a fashionable language for addressing the situation of the poor and underdeveloped in all parts of the world. A critical part of this language is the idea that only local people or the poor themselves are in the best position to determine the meaning and strategies for their own development. Following this reasoning, the needs of local communities are being analysed using so called participatory research techniques such as the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The idea is so powerfully seductive that many several NGOs and activists working on the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in Nigeria in general and the Niger Delta in particular have wholeheartedly embraced it. Groups like the Environmental Rights Action (ERA) and Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) have embraced the idea enthusiastically. In *Empowerment in*

Action: ERA's Community Intervention in the Niger Delta – A Model for Development, ERA (2003:24) states that it, “believes that local people’s empowerment is the key to sustainable development and conservation. ERA aims to achieve this through the establishment of Community Resource Centres.” Community Resource Centres, “are defined as focuses of self-help which communities initiate with the help of NGOs, but which they ultimately run and maintain themselves. Once established, a good CRC will be a focus for the accumulation and use of knowledge, and for the creation of wealth. Also, it will tend to be a sink for any aid funds and help that may be available. At their simplest, they are a single room that has a small reference library, which can be used for meetings, and where community members can sit or write. They might be specialised as a Resource Centre for each group in the community such as: Women, Youths, Farmers, Teachers; or even a combination of some of these or all of these as the case may be. They can become centres of innovation but essentially they are places where community members as individuals or groups can empower themselves with knowledge and use the tools of communication to make things happen” (Ojo, 2003:72). Atte (1989) who has worked closely with ERA has also written that:

...Rural communities in Africa and other parts of the third world have a profound and detailed knowledge of the ecosystem and species (the natural environment) which they are in contact with, and cultural settings within their respective environments. The dimensions of the knowledge are wide, encompassing the whole range of human experiences with regard both tangible and non-tangible entities. Their fields of knowledge include history, linguistics, economics, social knowledge, politics and administration; energy related technology; (the) physical environment of soils, water and climate; biological entities of plants, crops, weeds, pests, domestic and wide animals, medicines, taxonomic systems, time, skills, artefacts, religion and a host of others. In all these fields, each rural group has developed knowledge encompassing theory, concepts, interrelationships, factual and attributive information to a high degree of accuracy...

We agree entirely with the idea that the participation of local people in the design and implementation of the development process is a vital requirement for the legitimacy and success of the development initiatives. However, we believe that the idea has serious problems in the way it is currently being understood, canvassed and applied. First, the idea romanticises local people, the local community or the rural group. Local people, the local community or the rural group is not an undifferentiated mass of people with identical interests. Rather, the local community has a social structure, a critical and important part of which is the class structure. Within many local communities, there are rich and poor; there are the oppressors and the oppressed. Each of these social groups has a set of interests that define its position, linkages, relationships and aspirations in the world. What is more, some of these interests place members of one social group in direct antagonism to members of another or other social groups. This fact also explains the frequent conflicts in local communities even when members of such communities belong to the same ethnic group. The problem then is that community empowerment cannot be empowerment of both the rich and the poor; it must differentiate in terms of who is to be empowered and on the basis of this, how those who may see their control and privileged status being eroded as a result of the empowerment of others will be persuaded to accept the changes in the existing social structure.

A related matter is that the social stratification of society implies that members of society will differ on development goals. Thus the more stratified a society is, the more development goals are bound to differ across the different groups that make up

society. Under these circumstances the concept of the common good can only have relevance from the point of view of an understanding of the power and hence political relationships in society. The more powerful members in society usually construct and impose a sense of the common good from their own standpoint on the less powerful members of society. Hence the critical requirement for the construction of the common good is not simply that the people should be involved in development but that there is a leadership in place that derives its legitimacy, interests, concerns and attitudes from the people. In development, as well as in strategy formulation therefore, the critical element is the nature of leadership and the degree to which it is rooted in the people. The more a leadership is rooted in the people, the more the people come to be empowered to participate in the development process.

Another major flaw in the community empowerment approach is that it also makes the unwarranted assumption that local people have a rounded understanding of their problems and the needed solutions or as Atte has put it, that they, “have developed knowledge encompassing theory, concepts, interrelationships, factual and attributive information to a high degree of accuracy.” If this statement were true, local communities would not need NGO interventions in the first instance; they would also be able to respond to the political nature of their problems in a way that allowed them to retain and maintain control of their situation. Indeed to expose the precariousness of the assumption, we find it necessary to narrate a factual situation in which it is tested. This situation relates to Chief Nana and the dumping of the infamous toxic waste in his compound at Koko, Delta State. Dr. Lucky Akharuese, former President of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and a member of the Nana family tells the story:

One day I received a message in Port Harcourt from my Uncle, (Chief Nana) that something very important and very urgent was about to happen and that I must come home immediately. I had serious apprehensions because I thought the matter related to the inter-ethnic strife that was going on. Was somebody, or my family going to be attacked? Nevertheless, I rushed home. When I got home, my Uncle was in a great ecstatic mood. He said to me that our lives were going to change forever. He ordered for a bottle of hot drink and when it was bought, opened it and prayed. Then he poured a generous quantity into a glass and asked me to drink it. It was only after the drink that he proceeded to tell me what the great fortune was. He told me that about two weeks earlier some Europeans had come to his house with a business proposition. They told him they wanted to use his compound for storing some valuable oils for which they would pay N400.00 a month. He told me that they wanted a ten-year agreement in the first instance. He said he immediately agreed and that as a first installment, they had paid him N2,000.00. Can you imagine, he said what good fortune this was? I left Koko the next morning happy that at least, it was indeed good news although I felt that he could have obtained much more money for the place. About four weeks later, I returned. A part of the compound had been taken over by these strange looking drums that contained the oil. My Uncle was very happy as he took me round part of the compound to show me the stuff. It wasn't until some months later when the news broke that toxic waste had been dumped at Koko and in chief Nana's compound that I realized that what we had in the drums was not great fortune but certain death. Till today, my uncle cannot believe that the stuff was harmful. He still has regrets, especially over the fact that he can no longer count on the good fortune.

What this story clearly illustrates is the fact that local communities may themselves have a distorted or inadequate understanding of their own interests and conditions. Even when they do, there is a real possibility that they may lack the language to express their true feelings in the situation. To insist that a development initiative must be developed with their participation may thus lead to a focus on problems of an

urgent nature that are disconnected from their real interests and key issues that create, sustain, and deepen underdevelopment.

The fourth and perhaps, most fatal flaw in the empowerment argument, is that it leaves out of the entire scope of reflection consideration of who is to empower local communities, at least, on a long term, renewable basis. Very simply, the question is, who is to provide leadership in local communities and mobilise them to become empowered, and thus capable of defining, recognising and organising around their true interests in the situation? Are external agencies like the World Bank, IMF and the Commission of EU to do this through their working partners in the Niger Delta? Or, is this role to be performed by the Nigerian state? What these questions clearly indicate is that empowerment and participation must be defined in such a way that builds on the foundation of the people's history. Before the coming of the EU and the World Bank, the Niger Delta communities were at different times inspired and empowered by organisations, groups and individuals such as the Southern Minorities Movement, Niger Delta Volunteer Force, MOSOP and the Ijaw Youth Congress. They are still being inspired and empowered by these and other organisations that have come into existence for the express purpose of addressing the paradox of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. The economic empowerment argument will be empty to the extent that it seeks to undercut the political empowerment movement in the Niger Delta. It will also be empty to the extent that it leaves no room for the involvement of those who may not be poor but who take the standpoint of the oppressed in interpreting and acting on reality; in short on the progressive forces within and outside the community of the Niger Delta. Empowerment must be defined in a way that enables local communities to take advantage of the support of the most progressive forces in society. It must be defined in such a way that the political struggles by such organisations as MOSOP, IYC, Chikoko Movement are seen as the most important part of the solution set needed to achieve a rounded and robust empowerment of Niger Delta communities.

The third, and by all means, not the least ground for interrogating the approach favoured by the EU, World Bank and related external institutions is what they leave unsaid explicitly but declare clearly implicitly: namely that the approach is one that has been developed by international capital for masking the true situation and the required solution. Substantively, the involvement of the EU, World Bank and related agencies with their language of micro-credits and empowerment helps mask the political nature of the problem of the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. Indeed, their involvement and language have become a politics of their own that help deny the fact that the political character of the problem is being deliberately and consciously ignored in the analysis and treatment of the problem. As in the case of the rise of corporate philanthropy in the USA in particular and in the world in general, the involvement of the EU, World Bank and related Western institutions in the Niger Delta is to paint over the huge bloody stains on the canvas of the transnational corporations that are responsible, in collaboration with the Nigerian state, for the continuing underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. The general purpose is to invite Niger Delta communities to see that the transnational corporations that daily pollute their environment and supply arms and training to the Nigerian state for the suppression of resistance in the Niger Delta are after all, responsible corporate citizens. The Commission of European Community's MPP3 for example, would want Niger Delta communities to believe that but for, "some individuals (benefit captors), all the relief that came by oil companies towards the Niger Delta," would have

brought great ‘profit’ to the Niger Delta. There is nowhere in the document where analysis and action target the environment degrading activities of the oil companies. Indeed, there is nowhere in MPP3 where mention is made of the role of the transnational oil and gas corporations in the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. Rather than focus on the politics of underdevelopment and the historical as well as current role of EU countries and their transnational corporations in the process, the EU document makes the unwarranted assumption that it is the attitudes of Niger Delta communities towards money rather than the reality created by relationships of exploitation and hence differences in access to money and wealth that determine their actions and choices and the consequences of such actions and choices, such as conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment.

It is damning evidence of the multiple standards of the World Bank, and by implication, the governments and financial institutions of advanced western countries, that while they acknowledge the negative effects of oil production on the ecology of the Niger Delta, they nevertheless seek vigorously to propagate the view that ending gas flaring and oil spills and pollution are of low to moderate priority for the peoples of the Niger Delta (Table 7). For the World Bank, the issues of high priority to the communities and peoples of the Niger Delta are water hyacinth expansion, sewage, vehicular emissions, municipal solid wastes, toxic and hazardous circumstances! Interestingly, while, “the environmental impact of gas flaring in the Niger Delta is assessed as low,” by the World Bank, the same Bank states that the contribution of the gas flaring in the Niger Delta, “to the international problem of greenhouse gas emissions is substantial” (Agbola and Olurin (2003:14).

Table 7: Ranking of Environmental issues in the Niger Delta by the World Bank

Category	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Lower Priority
Land Resource Degradation	Agricultural land degradation Flooding (Moderate high)	Coastal erosion Riverbank erosion	Sea level rise
Renewable Resource Degradation	Fisheries depletion. Deforestation Biodiversity loss Water hyacinth expansion	Fisheries habitat Degradation	Mangrove Degradation Nypa palm expansion
Environmental Pollution	Sewage Vehicular emissions Municipal solid wastes Toxic and hazardous substances	Oil pollution Industrial effluents Industrial air emissions Industrial solid wastes	Gas flaring

Source: Agbola and Olurin (2003:14).

The view that the World Bank and western governments and institutions thus seek to propagate is that consequences are more important than their causes and that action to deal with the problem has to stay at the level of addressing consequences. They would want to end poverty in the Niger Delta while preserving the very conditions that produce and sustain poverty and underdevelopment. Like the famous character in the Tolstoy story, who is sitting on the shoulders of another man and pretending that he is extremely sorry for the man who is shouldering his bulky weight except by the getting off his back, the World Bank and the western governments would want the peoples of the Niger Delta to believe that they are genuinely concerned about their fate except that the communities in the Niger Delta should understand that the transnational oil companies must continue with their current very dehumanising but highly profitable methods of oil exploitation, appropriation and expropriation.

Olorode (1998:19) has noted that, “some of the campaigns in western circles about conservation of the forests and the environment in general, are of dubious integrity,” because they enable western circles undertake even more effective, ‘imperceptible, silent and therefore quite dangerous’ exploitation of both man and nature in the Third World. One ‘silent, imperceptible and quite dangerous’ way in which this occurs today in relation to the Niger Delta is the manner in which the EU and related Western institutions are providing a language and concepts, through micro projects and micro-credits, for structuring the thinking and hence action of local people and their ‘friends’ about their problems and how those problems are to be resolved. Okonta (2000:19) has also noted that while the accompaniments of the EU and related approaches,

may be well intentioned, their – some say, deliberate – refusal to see the wider picture, to see the deep-rooted historical and political currents that drive the present crisis in the Niger Delta, preferring to reduce the problem to a simple ‘Father Christmas’ case of distributing the artefacts of development to the local people (bore holes, milling machines and a few Naira notes) instead of working with local people to put in a place a new constitutional compact that will transform them – the local people – into agents of development able to provide these needs themselves as they clearly desire, could further muddy the water, and in the final reckoning, turn into an obstructing cog inviting forcible removal. Besides, it would be very difficult to convince the leaders of these communities that the same American government that is working with the Nigerian government to further militarise the Niger Delta by sending military sea craft to the region should be taken seriously when it hands out a few dollars to local NGOs to convene ‘peace-building’ meetings.

When it comes to practical politics, the language of micro projects, micro-credits, capacity building and empowerment of western governments and institutions changes to providing military equipment to the Nigerian state to prevent the expression by local people of another form of empowerment whose language is taught by their experience.

PART IV. THE WAY FORWARD

12. The Niger Delta communities and their alternative framework for Development in the Niger Delta

The practical experience of the communities in the Niger Delta has produced an avalanche of recommendations about the alternative path to the development of the Niger Delta. These recommendations differ sharply from those provided in the approaches of the Nigerian state, their collaborating oil companies and western governments and institutions. These recommendations not only provide, in our view, the most authentic basis for developing an alternative paradigm for the development of the Niger Delta; attitudes towards the recommendations also provide the clearest test of commitment to the development of the Niger Delta for those who preach empowerment since they represent the informed views of the peoples of the Niger Delta. Any framework that is fashioned for the development of the Niger Delta must flow from an understanding, examination and assessment of these recommendations.

On the whole, we can summarise the elements of the alternative framework for the development of the Niger Delta from the point of view of the communities of the Niger Delta into the following:

1. The call for true Federalism;
2. The demand for resource control and damage in derivation formula;
3. The demand for self determination;
4. The demand for the restoration of the environment;
5. The demand for change in the legislative framework for oil and gas exploration;
6. The demand for infrastructures and social services;
7. The demand for an end to the war in the Niger Delta;
8. Altering the neo-colonial, dependent nature of the Nigerian State.

12.1. The Call for True Federalism

The principles of genuine federalism are well known and have been discussed by several writers (Soremekun, 2000; Ogan-Iyam, 2000; Fadahunsi, 2000; Osuntokun, 2000; Elaigwu, 2000). Nwabueze (198:37) has noted that a,

Federation is an arrangement whereby powers of government within a country are shared between a national country-wide government and a number of regionalised (i.e. territorially localised) governments in such a way that each as a government separately and independently form the others directly on persons and property within its territorial area, with a will of its own apparatus for the conduct of its affairs and with an another in some matters exclusive of all the others.

There is widespread agreement among all the interest groups in the Niger Delta that the return to true federalism is a critical prerequisite for the development of the Niger Delta. These opinions are also united on the point that the 1979 and 1999 constitutions, “are nothing but civilian versions of Decree 34 of 1966” (Odje, 2002:203), which abrogated the provisions of the federal constitutions of 1960 and

1963 and created a unitary system of government for Nigeria. True federalism, from this point of view thus means a return to the cardinal principles set out in the 1960 and 1963 constitutions of Nigeria. Odje (2002:25-26) has argued for example that,

In order to have a firm grasp of the extent of federalism in any country or nation that operates a written Constitution, it is imperative to first examine the Exclusive Legislative List, Concurrent Legislative List and where applicable, the Residual List of the Constitution. In simple terms, the Exclusive Legislative List relates and deals on matters exclusively reserved for the federal Government of the country. The Concurrent Legislative List is concerned with equal power sharing between the federal and States, whilst the Residual List is usually reserved for the States. Upon a careful and holistic perusal of the provisions of the 1960 Constitution, it is lucid that our colonial masters succeeded more than ourselves in enthroning true federalism in Nigeria before their exit. In a lot of ways, the 1960 Constitution guaranteed fiscal autonomy to the regions. This is the idea of true federalism. In addition, each of the regions had a right (which they duly exercised) to enact their respective constitutions in relation to matters in the Concurrent Legislative List as well as all other matters supplementary thereto... The 1960 independence Constitution was actually built on genuine principles of true federalism...

For the peoples of the Niger Delta therefore the provisions of sections 134-136 of the 1960 independence constitution, which provided for fiscal autonomy to the regions, are held to be of special importance. These sections provided that:

1. There shall be paid by the Federation to each Region a sum equal to fifty per cent of:
 - a. the proceeds of any royalty received by the Federation in respect of any minerals extracted in that Region; and
 - b. any mining rents derived by the Federation during that year from within that Region.
 2. The Federation shall credit to the Distributable Pool Account a sum equal to thirty per cent of -
 - a. the proceeds of any royalty received by the Federation in respect of minerals extracted in any Region; and
 - b. any mining rents derived by the Federation from within any Region.
 3. For the purpose of this section the proceeds of a royalty shall be the amount remaining from the receipts of that royalty after any refunds or other repayments relating to those receipts have been deducted therefrom or allowed for.
 4. Parliament may prescribe the periods in relation to which the proceeds of any royalty or mining rents shall be calculated for the purposes of this section.
 5. In this section "minerals" includes mineral oil.
 6. For the purpose of this section the continental shelf of a Region shall be deemed to be part of that Region.
135. There shall be paid by the Federation to the Regions at the end of each quarter sums equal to the following fractions of the amount standing to the credit of the Distributable Pool Account at that date, that is to say:
- a. to Northern Nigeria, forty ninety-fifths;
 - b. to Western Nigeria, twenty-four ninety-fifths;
 - c. to Eastern Nigeria, thirty-one ninety-fifths.
136. Each Region shall in respect of each financial year pay to the federation an amount equal to such part of the expenditure incurred by the Federation during that financial year in respect of the department of customs and excise of the Government of the Federation for the purpose of collecting the duties referred to in sections 130, 131, 132 and 133 of this Constitution as in proportionate to the share of the proceeds of those duties received by that Region under those sections in respect of that financial year.

The essence of these provisions is that they granted a large measure of fiscal autonomy and resource control to the states. Given the recent bitter controversy between the Federal Government and the state governments in the Niger Delta region over ownership of the continental shelf adjoining to a state, the provisions of section 134 (6) of the 1960 constitution have special relevance. These provisions explicitly stated that the continental shelf of a region shall be deemed to be part of that region. True federalism also means, from the point of view of the peoples of the Niger Delta that the states in the region should be able to establish their own police forces, and create their own local governments. These are matters that the 1999 constitution has ruled to be out of the jurisdiction of the state governments. The result is that almost all power is concentrated at the centre while local communities are disempowered.

We believe that a federal structure is an indispensable requirement for the establishment and sustenance of the institutions needed to conceptualise and fashion solutions to the special problem of development in the Niger Delta. A true federal structure will mean that the peoples of the Niger Delta will be able to exercise a much higher level of autonomy not only in the area of internal and external relationships but also in the area of control over their oil and gas resources.

However, the existence of a true federal structure cannot be captured alone in the existence of institutions and in fiscal and related provisions in the constitution that provide for and guarantee true federalism; at the heart of such a structure must be a set of values that governs the conduct of all those who act within the structures and institutions of governance. By a set of values, we mean a set of shared standards relating to behaviours, decisions and actions that serve the common good that all individuals and groups are motivated or feel compelled to and maintain in the public domain.

Indeed, it can be argued that the absence of such values represent the most fundamental challenge of governance and hence development in Nigeria. Electoral politics provides a clear example of the situation. Here, the existence of appropriate governance institutions within a federal structure of power may provide for representation at all levels of governance. At the lowest level, there would be as currently exists, a local government structure with roles for community representatives who are required to pass through an electoral process. The institution and structures of governance may actually go through the motions of getting the people to vote at elections. But the entire process and hence the foundational structures and institutions may be a total farce because of the absence of values that compel actors to respect the wishes of the people. In effect, as frequently happens in Nigeria, the elections may be massively rigged at all levels of governance thus making absolute nonsense of the federal structure and the institutions of governance within which it is realised. In such a situation, the notion of participatory politics, which is a kernel requirement in true federalism, cannot be said to have been realised. Finally, we believe that a true federal structure is one whose roots grow to the lowest levels of governance in society. True federalism cannot mean the autonomy and initiative of the nationality group or next level of governance in relation to the centre; it must also mean the autonomy and initiative of the local government authority in relation to the state government and the autonomy and initiative of the village or community in relation to the local government authority.

The implication of this is to indicate the critical importance of the last and, by all means, the most important governance issue in Nigeria: the problem of leadership. Only leaders can build and sustain the required institutions, operate a true federal structure and establish as well as abide by values. In essence, to speak about the problem of governance in Nigeria is to address the failure of leadership. Only leaders can bring about change in several of the assumptions that currently govern the relationship between the Nigerian state and the Nigerian people. The wielders of state power must truly believe in the sovereignty of the people and on the basis of this belief must change their assumption that they are superior to the Nigerian people. They must equally change their assumptions about what represents the national interest; they must learn to understand and therefore wield power from the principle that the national interest is what coincides with the interest of the Nigerian people rather than with their own narrow, sectional and parochial interests.

In summary, at least four areas of change are required in the nature and character of governance in Nigeria. First, there must be an adequate number of governance institutions that are strong in themselves, have the required content and that can act as checks and balances on each other. The principle of the separation of powers must have the required depth; and in addition, it must also operate with the required degree of strength. Secondly, there must be a true federal structure whose roots grow to the lowest levels of governance in society. True federalism cannot mean the autonomy and initiative of the nationality group in relation to the centre; it must also mean the autonomy and initiative in relation to the local governments and the state governments and the autonomy and initiative of the communities in relation to the local government authorities. Finally, both the institutions and structures of governance must be founded upon a sound set of values that govern the conduct of all actors in the system. These actors must function as leaders, rather than as rulers.

The Demand for Self Determination

The demand for self-determination is qualitatively different from the demand for true federalism. Self-determination means either a confederal arrangement that guarantees a lot of power to the confederating parts or, a total break-up of the country into a number of independent and sovereign nation states. Many groups in the Niger Delta see this approach as the only path to the development for the Niger Delta. From the mid 1990's, a number of organisations in the Niger Delta, notably the Movement for National Reformation (MNR), have argued for self-determination of the separate peoples of Nigeria along confederal lines. Yet, the MNR had several significant historical antecedents in this regard. One of these antecedents and the very first from the Niger Delta was the Delta Volunteer Force organised by Isaac Adaka Boro in the early 1960s. This movement was crushed by the federal army of the period; Isaac Boro and several of the Volunteers who were not killed were captured, tried and sentenced to death. The death penalty was not carried out however, because other more serious political developments occurred at the centre. These developments culminated in the 1966-1970 Nigeria-Biafra war in which the Eastern Region led by General Odumegwu Ojukwu sought to exit from the Nigerian federation. Again, the move was thwarted by force: Ojukwu's army was defeated by the armies of the federal government after four years (1967-1970) of a bitter and murderous civil war.

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) can be seen as the direct beneficiaries of the Isaac Adaka Boro experience. Arising from monumental devastation of Ogoni land by the combined oil extraction operations of the Nigeria state and the transnational oil Companies, MOSOP began as an advocacy group for the ecological and human rights of the Ogoni people. As the repression of peaceful protests in the Niger Delta by the Nigeria state and the oil companies began to take on an increasingly violent character, MOSOP began to internationalise its campaign and engage in more active forms of resistance. The organisation forced the oil companies to close down extraction activities. It also produced the Ogoni Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights identified the Ogoni as a distinct nationality group with the right to self-determination and hence control over its natural and mineral resources. Self-determination included the right the Ogoni people to conduct their affairs as an independent sovereign state. The Ogoni Bill of Rights quickly inspired other nationality groups in the Niger Delta to produce their own Bill of Rights. The Kaiama Declaration by the Ijaw Nationality group in the Niger Delta is a major example of this trend and the agitation for self-determination in the Niger Delta.

The idea behind self-determination is that only such an arrangement will enable the people of the Niger Delta reap the full benefits of their oil and gas resources. It is argued that self-determination will remove the fetters imposed on the communities of the Niger Delta by members of the ruling class from the other major nationality groups in Nigeria. Thus it is equally seen as the solution to the rapacious exploitation of the people by the consortium of multinational oil companies operating in the area. It is believed that self-determination will enable the peoples of the Niger Delta right the wrongs of the past and launch the region into an era of substitutable development. The self-determination option has also become an especially appealing option in the light of developments in other parts of the world particularly in the former East European socialist countries where **counter-revolution** has produced a number of independent capitalist states. The break-up of former Yugoslavia and the emergence of new nation states from the old federation have also shown that small, nationally coherent states can survive in an increasingly divided world.

There are however some questions, which the argument for self-determination has to answer in the Niger Delta. One of these is the number of new independent nation states that can be expected to emerge in the region. The geopolitical solution currently advanced by Nigeria's ruling class is to see the Niger Delta as being made up of six states: Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers. Will each of these states constitute a new independent state? Will some merge to create a smaller number of independent, self-determining states? If either option were to occur, what would happen to members of different nationality groups that are currently located in the same state? Will the Ijaws, in the current Delta State have to move to Bayelsa State or would it be better for Delta and Bayelsa States to establish a new independent state that would include the Ijaws, Isekiris and Urhobos in the same state? These questions are important in view of the ethno-based violent conflicts that currently characterise the relationship between these groups.

Another question that would need to be answered by the argument for self-determination is the nature of the political system that would be adopted by the new independent states. Would they remain capitalist? In effect, the question is this: would an ethnically heterogeneous independent, self-determining Niger Delta nation state under a capitalist political economic system not reproduce, perhaps in shaper

focus, the very conditions and contradictions that led to the creation of the new nation state in the first place? This question is important because, in the final analysis, the nature of exploitation that is foisted upon a people and their environment is a direct consequence of the adopted political system. We believe that such new capitalist nation states in the Niger Delta would be fertile grounds for even more bitter forms of conflict between the new majority and the new minority ethnic groups in the new nation state. The only condition that could moderate such an outcome would be roles played by the different social forces in the process of self-determination and which social forces – progressive and community rooted or right-wing and pro-imperialist – won the contest for power in the new nation state. This position is informed by the fact that even within the current unified federal structure that operates in Nigeria, the dominant political forces in the Niger Delta have always shown themselves to be as indifferent, if indeed not more indifferent, than the dominant political forces from outside the Niger Delta, to the genuine development needs of the poor in the Niger Delta. Then there is also the experience of history. Enahoro (1985:21-22) a frontline participant in the nationalist struggle for self-determination and independence has recounted that:

...In the entire history of the anti-colonial struggles of our time, ours is the only country in which those who fought for independence were not those who had the privilege and the historic duty of meeting the challenges of independence...The truth of the matter, which determined efforts to falsify history cannot forever conceal, is that the nationalists who were prepared to work, to date – to die if need be – so that a new and democratic nation might be born, these people lost control of the situation and were displaced or succeeded by those who had remained untouched by the unifying and modernizing flames of the nationalism... When independence came in the fullness of time, neither the goodwill of progressive forces... nor our trade unions, nor our youth could prevent the inevitable course of events when those who were least disposed towards democracy became the official guardians of our fledging democracy...

Enahoro's statement is an eloquent testimony to the fact that it is not enough to initiate and win the struggle for self-determination; of greater significance is the nature of the social forces that assume power after the arrival of self-determination. Nigeria's post independence experience and its monumental failure at nation building, governance and developing the economy have been attributed to the singular event that, "when independence came in the fullness of time, ... those who were least disposed towards democracy became the official guardians of our fledging democracy..." The Niger Delta cannot be expected to be exempted from this experience of history.

A third important question is the nature of the process that would be required to nurture the new nation states. The lessons of the Nigerian civil war and the current war of the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta indicate something of the difficulty that can be expectedly be encountered in the process. There is absolutely no doubt that a union, no matter how imperfect, cannot be dissolved without some measure of acrimony. At the level of the Nigerian nation state with its hardened cobweb of entrenched interests, it can not be expected that the ruling circles will accept dialogue as the basis for reaching agreements on how much right each nationality group should exercise in determining its own affairs. Indeed, over the last many years, several groups led by the human rights and pro-democracy organisations have argued for the convocation of a Sovereign National Conference as the basis for resolving conflicts over the national question, the Nigerian project, the nature of relationships between the nationalities, resource control and revenue derivation formula,

federalism, and human and environmental rights among others. The dominant coalition in Nigeria's ruling class has, however, consistently rejected the argument and preferred instead to continue with business as usual supported by the state's armour of coercion. The experience with the Sovereign National Conference shows that the nationality and self-determination question cannot be resolved through dialogue.

Experience has shown that the alternative road, which is force, has so far not produced and may not ever produce the desired results unless there are significant changes in the mindsets and methods of those who are travelling this road. First, there is abundant evidence to suggest that there are significant differences and even contradictions between the various groups who not only see self-determination as the only road to the development of their areas but also believe that force is the necessary and sufficient means to achieve it. The absence of a Niger Delta-wide movement that articulates the concerns at a political level and therefore has a clearly thought-out strategy for pursuing the concerns is another part of this evidence. The incidents of hostage taking, vandalising of pipelines, occupation or seizure of oil facilities and related acts for the purpose of extracting money from the state and the oil companies is also part of the evidence. Finally, the raging incidents of inter-ethnic wars indicate that the alternative road has a long way to go before it can become a viable path to travel.

The fourth and perhaps most important problem with the demand for self-determination is that it makes the unwarranted assumption that nation states based upon common ethnic identities will guarantee rights more equally to all members of the ethnic group than is possible in a multi-ethnic nation state. If this assumption were true, then the creation of states largely on the basis of the homogeneity of the ethnic groups involved would have righted a number of historical wrongs, perhaps to a higher degree in some than in others, across all the states in Nigeria. The fact that this has not happened and that in many states, the situation has become worse indicates that ethnic identity does not reduce the propensity and inclination of members of the same ethnic group to exploit each other. We believe that what needs to be addressed are those issues that force ethnic consciousness to the forefront of the responses that individuals feel compelled to identify with in a given historical situation. In the Nigerian situation, those issues include injustice and exploitation in economic, political and social relations. It is true that the relationship between the majority and the minority nationality groups does contribute to the relative weight of exploitation that members of the different nationality groups come to experience and perceive. But belonging to a majority or minority nationality group is not the key determinant of that experience. The key determinant is the role and hence relationship that men and women as members of distinct social classes have to the means of production, distribution and exchange. The solution to the problem therefore, cannot be the struggle for new nation states that are ethnically homogenous because such a solution does not and cannot reduce, let alone abolish injustice and exploitation. The solution has to be one that employs a form of social identity that enables members of different ethnic groups that suffer from exploitation to confront it as a united force. As Fashina (2000:90-91) has pointed out in his incisive analysis of the nationality question in Nigeria:

The idea that ethnic identity is foundational in understanding and resolving the national question in Nigeria is questionable. We may ask, why are ethno-cultural groups, rather

than socio-economic classes, or religious groups, or gender groups, foundational? Why is my being a Yoruba person, not my being a member of the ruling class, or a member of the intelligentsia the most important social fact about me? Or why ought it be so? If my identities can be multiplied, and they can be, why is my ethnic identity so special? Why ought it to be? In what way is a person's ethnic identity more compelling than his or her class or other identity? The truth, in my opinion, is that the "naturalness" of ethnic identity does not make ethnicity foundational in social relations. We do not choose our ethnic origin. But nobody chooses what class he or she is born into, either. And just as a person's class can change, a person's culture can change. The idea that people live a freer, more satisfying life, and are culturally more elevated when they live in communities of co-ethnics, is false.

The central question in Nigeria is about how to re-organize the society so that all rights, duties, and social values such as produced wealth, liberties, income, powers and opportunities are distributed in a way that will satisfy the aspiration of everyone to a good life made possible by the level of development of production of wealth, the class structure, and the history and culture of our society. Each of us has overlapping identities, some of which may conflict with some others: class versus ethnic identity, religious versus ethnic identity, religious versus class identity; identities in pure form are not found in real societies. No one is only an Efik, an Igbo, a Bachama and nothing more. We do not live in closed ethnic universes. The role played by different identities depends upon socio-historical circumstances. In times of intense class conflict or severe economic deprivation, ethnic identity comes to the fore, as a ground for making special claims to exclude "others" from jobs, housing and welfare goods. In times of relative prosperity, ethnic differences do not usually find antagonistic expression.

The national question, then, takes its character from its effect on the central question i.e. the production and distribution of wealth, the distribution of liberties and powers. In some historical circumstances, ethnic nationalism is a response to intense exploitation and injustice. This is the situation in the Delta area of Nigeria today.

12.3. The Demand for Resource Control

The peoples of the Niger Delta, are united for different reasons, over the idea that control over oil and gas resources by the people of the Niger Delta, is vital for the development of the area. For members of the ruling class in the Niger Delta, resource control however means their right as the ruling class to control the resources of the communities, on behalf of the communities. In essence, it means a reproduction of the current status in relation to the laws except that, ownership and expropriation of the oil and gas resources will now be vested in members of the ruling class of the Niger Delta rather than in members of the ruling class in Nigeria. For members of the local communities however, resource control has a significantly different meaning. It means the right of the communities to jointly own and exploit, under arrangements of their own making, the oil and gas resources in their areas. Given the existing social structure of the traditional communities, resource control cannot mean the right of private individuals under whose lands resources are found, to exploit such resources for themselves.

To support the argument for resource control, the peoples of the Niger Delta point to different historical evidence. One such evidence comes from the provisions of the early, truly federalist constitutions. As we have already pointed out, the 1960 and 1963 constitutions provided that the littoral states were the owners of the oil and gas deposits located in their continental shelves. In addition, the constitution also allowed for a revenue derivation formula that was fair to the states. The unitary structure of governance established for the country under the long dark night of military rule completely eroded the fair and equitable provisions in the 1960 and

1963 constitutions on revenue derivation and revenue allocation to the 'regions' as they were then known.

The current 'civil rule government' has also repeatedly shown its opposition to a truly federal arrangement on resource control. This opposition has led to court actions in which the governments of the littoral oil producing states joined issues with the Federal government. At the centre was the issue of the interpretation of the continental shelf, relabelled the onshore-offshore dichotomy, and what rights the littoral states could exercise over oil deposits in the area. The President of the Republic, representing the interests of a section of the ruling class refused to assent to a bill passed by the National Assembly which gave a liberal interpretation to the provisions of the constitution which provide that the continental shelf of a coastal state is 200 nautical miles and that such states are therefore entitled to the application of the derivation formula with respect to the oil and gas extracted in the shelf. The most recent development has seen the replacement of the onshore-offshore dichotomy with the provision of a 200 metres Isobath for the coastal states. Sagay (2004:7) has written of this recent development that,

by far the most disturbing consequence of the coastal states' limitation to a 200-metre depth belt for derivation purposes, is that all the major off-shore oil and gas finds are now in the deep off-shore zone between 1000 and 2500 metres... The deep off-shore will progressively bring an increasing proportion of Nigerian oil and gas' to which the coastal states that have been environmentally devastated will not have derivation claims.

As a general rule, experience in different parts of the world tends to suggest that in most cases, ownership over oil and gas resources and indeed other mineral resources, including water, is usually vested in the state. In the United Kingdom, for example, ownership and the exclusive rights of prospecting and drilling for oil and gas are vested in the Crown by virtue of the Petroleum (Production) Act of 1934. In Libya, ownership of all petroleum in its natural state is vested in the state. This situation is also to be found in other Third World countries where deposits of oil, gas and other minerals are to be found. The only major exception is the United States of America where ownership over such resources is vested directly in the individuals on whose lands such resources are found. In most of the countries of the world, the exploitation of such resources is usually directed towards 'fostering the common good'. In such countries, however, particular attention is paid to the needs of the communities, including the needs of their environment in which resources are located. Thus large proportions of the revenues so derived are made available to, or reserved for the development of such communities.

The exceptional situation in Nigeria is that the needs of the communities and their environment are totally neglected in the exploitation of oil and gas resources. It would therefore appear that what is required is a discussion not simply over ownership rights but how the benefits of the exploitation of the resources are distributed. We believe that it is this issue that makes the debate over the derivation formula and corruption in Nigeria one of strategic importance. We want to suggest that the agitation for resource control would become muted if the nation returned to and improved upon the revenue derivation formula provided in the 1960 and 1963 constitution when the country operated as truly a federal state. It is for this reason that the agitations for resource control needs to be refocused to target more intensely the revenue derivation formula. This is not to suggest that various aspects of the law that relate to resource control do not need to be changed; in fact they do. There is no

doubt, for example, that certain aspects of the Land Use Act need urgent review and change. The point however is to rethink what aspects of the law need to change rather than to call for a complete change in the law on resource control.

12.4. The Demand for the Restoration of the Environment

A critical demand of the Niger Delta communities and which is seen as central to the development of the area is the demand for the restoration of the environment. We have seen how oil and gas exploitation activities have turned the Niger Delta into an ecological wasteland. The perception of the Niger Delta communities that the restoration of the environment of the Niger Delta is inseparable from the development of the area thus has a solid foundation. The restoration of the environment presupposes not only a change in the ongoing methods of oil and gas exploitation but also the injection of massive funds to restore dead rivers, soils, varieties of trees, plants and animals. It is also on record that several new diseases have appeared in the Niger Delta and that cases of infertility are on the increase. Efforts to deal with these and related problems are at the core of the demand for the restoration of the environment in the Niger Delta. Thus the demand envisages action on both the human and natural systems of the Niger Delta in a way that halts ongoing assaults, regenerates dead systems and preserves what is left from old and new forms of assault.

The demand for the restoration of the environment needs to be broadened to include the demand for the payment of ecological debt to the communities of the Niger Delta. As early as the 1920s, Nicolas Pigou, the Cambridge economist, argued that, “the full cost of production, including whatever pollution, sickness or environmental damage they caused,” must be paid by producers. Navia (1994:13) has also indicated that ecological debt arises from two obligations; the first, “to the biosphere resulting from the incompatible interventions of its essential biological systems and processes causing the destruction of habitats, extinction of species and a grave alteration of planetary homeostasis, with the consequent threat to all living forms,” the second, “to humanity acquired by reason of often irreversible damages to the biophysical base of societies, provoked by islands of privilege, wasteful economies and industries of barbarity, the consequences of which have been the impoverishment and exclusion of hundreds of million of people, ethnocide and subjugation of cultures.” Martinez-Alier (2001:1) insists that the ecological debt arises from,

two separate ecological distribution conflicts. First, the export of raw materials and other products from relatively poor countries are sold at prices, which do not include compensation for local or global externalities. Second, rich countries make a disproportionate use of environmental space or services without payment, and even without recognition of other people’s entitlements to such services (particularly the disproportionate free use of carbon dioxide sinks and reservoirs.

Finally, Latin American NGOs who are in the forefront of the demand for the payment of ecological debt have seen it as, “the debt accumulated by Northern, industrial countries towards Third World Countries on account of resource plundering, environmental damages and the free occupation of environmental space to deposit wastes, such as green house gases from the industrial countries” (Donoso, 2000:3). All these statements indicate a new area of action, one of whose consequences would be the provision of funds from the payment of the debt for the restoration and hence development of the Niger Delta.

12.5. The Demand for Changes in the Legislative Framework

The legislative framework for the exploitation of the oil and gas resources in the Niger Delta has been cited as a major cause of the problem of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. Indeed as we have shown, the existing legislative framework facilitates the process of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. For this reason, all groups in the Niger Delta believe that change in the existing legislative framework has to be an integral component of any resolve to develop the Niger Delta. Various individuals and groups have also identified the legislation that needs to be changed or introduced. For example, there is agreement that the legislation on gas flaring and oil spills need to be drastically reviewed to provide for stiff penalties for oil companies and adequate compensation to the oil producing communities. There is also agreement that a better legislative framework is needed to protect and enable the regeneration of the biodiversity in the Niger Delta. The understanding is that with such and other related legislative changes, the Niger Delta communities and their environment will be better protected.

The argument that the Niger Delta communities are entitled to payment of the ecological debt also requires to be backed up by legislation. It is in this regard that the call for the review of the Land Use Act has particular significance. The significance derives from the fact that entitlement to payment of the ecological debt is premised on property rights – the right of individuals and communities to own land. Investing ownership of all land in the state can lead to the ridiculous situation where the right to ecological debt can be denied on the ground that being state property, the same state cannot be said to owe itself for the abuse of its own property. This argument falls apart when it is remembered that it is individuals and their environment as defined by belonging to specific communities, rather than a faceless state, that suffer from the consequences of environmental abuse. The kernel of reform required in the Land Use Act is one that would enable individuals and communities to exercise rights of ownership over land and therefore to compensation for negative externalities that arise from the exploitation of the resources on, as well as under, such land. In essence, a change in the law on property rights would be of fundamental importance in providing for the development of the Delta region because it would entitle specific communities to payment of huge financial compensation from the transnational oil companies for past and future wrongs that arise from the exercise of the rights granted them to exploit the oil and gas resources in the area.

12.6. The Demand for Poverty Eradication, Infrastructures and Social Services

Underdevelopment is often experienced as a state of generalised poverty and want in basic necessities characterised by low GNP per capita, low life expectancy, high levels of illiteracy, unemployment, disease, and hunger. It is also characterised by the absence of adequate infrastructures and housing. These and the other indices of underdevelopment are, as we have shown, present all over the Niger Delta. In the various programmes advanced by the Nigerian state for the development of the Niger Delta, development has usually been understood in terms of providing physical infrastructures. The recent programmes of the Nigerian state on poverty eradication in Nigeria in general and in the Niger Delta in particular has also emphasised the

provision of basic amenities – roads, water, electricity generating-sets as the essence of development.

It is therefore not surprising that a cardinal element in the demands of the Niger Delta communities for the development of the area has been the provision of infrastructures and social amenities. Indeed, in certain instances, the development of the Niger Delta is understood strictly in these terms. The belief is that development occurs when infrastructures and social services are provided to the people. This narrow understanding of the requirements and essence of development within some elements of the Niger Delta communities is understandable. Apart from the socialising effect that the understanding of the state of development has for the people, a much more significant effect is produced by the reality of the poverty of infrastructures and social services in the Niger Delta. It has, for example, been suggested that the agitation of the Niger Delta communities gathered bitter momentum after the youths of the area who had been mobilised to support Abacha's fated self-succession bid returned from the intimidating presence of Abuja's infrastructures and glass houses. To the youths who understood only too well that Abuja's dream had been fulfilled by depriving the Niger Delta of its own dream, there was no reason why Abuja could not be replicated all over the Niger Delta with the same money from the Niger Delta that had raised Abuja from dust and stones. To the youths, development came to mean adequate infrastructures and glass houses.

There is no doubt that development in the Niger Delta requires the massive injection of funds to provide infrastructures and social amenities. Indeed, the new NDDC has been given such a mandate. There is a need to point out however, that providing infrastructures and social amenities will not be enough to reverse poverty and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. Of perhaps, more crucial significance, is the role that past and emergent leaders of the communities in the Niger Delta play in the decisions that lead to the decisions to create NDDCs, NDDBs and OMPADECs which are then given the mandate 'to develop the Niger Delta'. The essence of such a role would be to help define from the point of view of the Niger Delta communities, the interests that infrastructure development serves, which forms of infrastructures are to be preferred, and how they are to be executed and made to fit into the overall development needs of the Niger Delta. To do this effectively, it is necessary to dialogue on needs with those organisations in the Niger Delta that have been in the forefront of the struggle for a politically and economically developed Niger Delta. These organisations would include but not be limited to MOSOP, the Ijaw Youth Congress, and the Chikoko Movement.

What are the programmatic implications of altering the nature of this position? They are several and require the Nigerian state to address the food, health, educational, employment, and infrastructural needs, in short, the economic well-being of the people of the Niger Delta. These actions will need to differentiate between the poor and oppressed in the Niger Delta in terms of actual levels of poverty, the urban-rural dimension, age and gender. Already the NDDC is conducting a survey of these needs in the Niger Delta. The results of this survey must be used in making decisions about priorities and resource allocations. To be meaningful however, such decisions will need to be made and implemented through the agency of the movements and organisations of the communities in the Niger Delta. The Nigerian state also owes the Niger Delta a debt from the shortfalls in the payments to the various boards that were set up over the years to 'develop the Niger Delta'. This debt must be quantified and

paid into an account that will be managed and applied for the development needs of the Niger Delta by the true representatives of the people.

12.7. The Demand for End to the Wars in the Niger Delta

As we have shown, there are two separate types of wars raging in the Niger Delta. The first is the one being waged, more or less openly, by the Nigerian state against the communities in the Niger Delta. The second is the inter-ethnic or inter-community wars in the Niger Delta. There is no doubt that war and development cannot go hand in hand. For this reason, different groups have called for an end to the wars in the Niger Delta as a prerequisite for the development of the area. Okonta (2000:17) has succinctly made the case in the following words:

...In the short term, we call for an immediate cease-fire in the Niger Delta. We use the term 'cease-fire' because war, albeit of the low-intensity variety, has already broken out in the region. The Niger Delta is highly militarised. Youths are routinely shot by armed soldiers that have taken over the area. The new civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, instead of moving to restore the confidence of the local people in his government by removing the troops, has instead, reached an agreement with the United States government to supply fast attack boats and sophisticated weaponry, ostensibly to patrol the Niger Delta and check the incidence of oil smuggling. But such groups as the IYC and MOSOP have correctly interpreted the fresh deployment of men and weaponry as a continuation of the strong-arm tactics of the Abacha regime, designed to intimidate local communities struggling peacefully for social and ecological justice. And when they refuse to back down, to use the same awesome and superior firepower to pummel them into submission.

If the bloody but heroic resistance of Ogoni and Ijaw youths to the combined forces of the government and the oil companies has anything to recommend to policy makers, it is that more soldiers and sophisticated weaponry is not the road to peace in the Niger Delta. Vietnam clearly demonstrated that a people, convinced that they are in the right and that they are fighting a war of survival, will be able to face the biggest of armies and acquit themselves creditably. President Obasanjo and his advisers must demonstrate courage and discard the old nostrum, a carry-over from Biafra, which argues that the only way to continue to keep the oil fields of the Niger Delta under the control of the Federal Government is through the deployment of the instruments of violence. What is sorely needed, and urgently, is new thinking, in short, a shift in paradigm. The new argument must be that the best way to guarantee the continued participation of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta in the Nigeria project will be through dialogue, informed by the acknowledgement that they are equal partners in this project. And dialogue can only be initiated when the aggressor – in this case the Nigerian government and oil company officials – demonstrate good faith by ordering the soldiers still rampaging in the area back to the barracks. The local communities would then be bound, faced with this gesture, to tone down their language of anger and meet the government at the negotiation table...

We agree entirely with this submission. The Nigerian state must end its war in the Niger Delta. As we have already stated, war and development cannot go hand in hand. For this reason, in a war situation, those forces committed to development often have to work to bring the war to an end as part of the overall strategy of development of the areas or regions involved. The Nigerian state must therefore abandon the garrisoning agenda for the Niger Delta. It must instead, ensure that individuals and groups who have been violated in the past are healed through a system of justice that provides relief to the victim and clear punishment for persecutors. A step that must be taken in this regard is conducting a public inquiry, with the status of an Oputa Panel, into all cases of human rights violations in the Niger Delta. Such a panel would need to recall the case of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the

other MOSOP leaders who were murdered and deal with the facts in a way that would show that a grave mistake was made by the state.

We would however like to add, that the above recommendations deal with only the first type of war in the Niger Delta. The second type of war, the inter-ethnic wars, most of which are encouraged by the policies and actions of the Nigerian state and the oil companies have, however, some independence of their own. It is important that these wars also be brought to an end if there is to be genuine development in the Niger Delta. The process for ending these wars must involve a discussion that brings all the combatants, in essence their representatives, to the conference table. It has to be a conference with powers to make decisions that bind the representatives and their constituencies. Several of such conferences may need to be held until they cover all the parties and their claims, in dispute. These mini-conferences would then be a prelude to a Summit of the Niger Delta peoples. There is a need to emphasise the point that we do see the process of ending the inter-ethnic wars as a major input into ending the war of the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta. The essence of this input is that the war of the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta is predicated specifically upon the weakness of the Niger Delta as a united community of diverse peoples. There is a great sense in which an end to the inter-ethnic wars will provide the push to the Nigerian state to rethink its garrisoning agenda. This sense is that the cost of maintaining the agenda would certainly become prohibitive against the background of a united Niger Delta.

12.8. Altering the neo-colonial, dependent character of the Nigerian state

The Niger Delta peoples and the progressive forces in Nigeria understand that there is a close relationship between the neo-colonial, dependent character of the Nigerian state and the underdevelopment problem in the Niger Delta. This relationship accounts for the presence of American troops in the Niger Delta, for the servant/master status between successive managers of the Nigerian state and the global transnational oil company, Shell. It also accounts for the weak regime of regulations governing oil and gas exploitation and why, rather than protect the communities and the environment against abuse, the Nigerian state has preferred to garrison the Niger Delta. Altering the neo-colonial and dependent nature of the Nigerian state has several requirements. Toyo (2003) has argued that this means completing the struggle for the independence of the country, which began in the 1940s but was subsequently hijacked by those who had not been touched by the passion for freedom. For other observers, it requires securing the independence of the country from foreign capital and such imperialist institutions as the World Bank and IMF. A third way in which the requirement has been interpreted, is replacing the existing capitalist order with a socialist one. All these requirements are not only related; they are predicated upon a recognition of the acute and even urgent need to create a leadership at all levels of governance in Nigeria that has a deep understanding of leadership and its historical and current challenges in the African situation in general and in the Nigerian situation in particular.

By leadership, we mean the process of energising a group of followers to define and realise a desired future in which the interdependent expectations, needs and objectives, of both the leader and the followers, are fulfilled at increasingly higher levels in competition or collaboration with other leaders and groups, all of whom

depend largely upon the same resource environment for the attainment of the desired future. This understanding of leadership indicates that:

- Leadership is a property of the social relationship: without followers, there can be no leaders and without leaders, there can be no followers;
- The responsibilities of leadership are to energise a group of followers to define and realise a desired future in which the interdependent expectations and needs of the leaders and followers are fulfilled at increasingly higher and higher levels;
- Leaders energise followers to define and realise a desired future in a world in which there is competition between groups for control and use of a finite set of resources that all the groups depend upon to achieve their desired future;
- Leadership is different from rulership. Whereas leaders work with followers to define and realise a jointly determined future, rulers use, exploit and criminalise followers to achieve their personal needs and ambitions. Whereas leaders carry the cross on behalf of followers, rulers make followers carry the cross of the rulers; while leaders bear pain on behalf of followers, rulers inflict pain on followers; whereas leaders liberate people and their potential, rulers imprison people and their potential.

We can extract the qualities and hence responsibilities of true leadership from this understanding of leadership and from the real lives of true leaders. These qualities include:

- **Sense of history:** True leaders know the history of their people in relation to other peoples, they know where they and their people are coming from. Without this knowledge, they would never be able to work with their people to define a desired future;
- **Future orientation:** From a sense of a history, true leaders seek in collaboration with their followers to define a future or series of futures that while enabling them to build on their past, also allows them to avoid the humiliation, errors and regrettable moments of that past. This future orientation allows true leaders to think of the future in terms of a series of improvements in the position that their followers currently occupy not only in relation to time but also in relation to other groups;
- **Follower focus:** True leaders seek and acquire a deep understanding of their followers and their needs. They experience the highest level of satisfaction when they are vindicated by their followers. They are in deep empathy with their followers: in this sense, they seek to wash the feet of their followers;
- **A sense of strategic positioning:** True leaders understand that they and their followers operate in an environment in which other leaders and their followers need basically the same things that they want. They seek therefore to position themselves and their people in the most advantageous position possible. They will do this, however, with a passionate sense of justice for the rights and needs of other leaders and their followers. In short, they operate from an abundance mentality;
- **Institution building:** True leaders build institutions rather than themselves. Their main interest is in leaving behind some legacy, some great idea, some great framework that has its roots, support and hence continuity in the lives of their people.

Only a leadership that has the above qualities can exercise the kind of initiatives required to alter the balance of power between Nigeria and international capital. Such a leadership will be able to define the development needs of the Niger Delta in a way that seeks to right historical wrongs and guarantee a future robust for meeting its economic, political, social, and environmental needs. Such a definition will mean rejecting the current framework of rules that favour the interests of international capital; it will mean being distrustful and therefore wary of the solutions designed in the boardrooms of global capital – the IMF, the World Bank and transnational corporations – for the development of Nigeria and the Niger Delta. It will mean working with the confidence that Nigerians rather than foreign capital are to be relied upon to develop Nigeria.

At the same time, altering the neo-colonial, dependent nature of the Nigerian state requires redefining the means for the primitive accumulation of capital. There is no doubt that the Nigerian state would be able to act more independently and that more benefits would flow to the Niger Delta communities if there were less corruption in the appropriation of the rewards from the exploitation of the oil and gas resources of the area. As we have seen, the problem of corruption and resource control, this time by the Nigerian state, are related. To deal with the problem of corruption, the managers of the Nigerian state have made a number of noises. The latest in the series of such noises is the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) by the Federal Government under President Obasanjo. Going by historical precedents and the high level of corruption under the Obasanjo government, it is quite clear that these steps cannot address the problem. Indeed, one assessment (Joseph, 2003:12) of the impact of these efforts which are even seen as even being the most radical and far reaching in the history of the country has is instructive in this regard:

... On May 29, 1999, I was present at the inauguration of President Olusegun Obasanjo when he delivered one of the most forthright condemnations of corruption I have ever heard. Today, Nigeria is regarded internationally, as having made minimal progress in responding to this challenge. Entrenched political corruption has become one element of a broader phenomenon that can be called catastrophic governance. I define catastrophic governance as endemic practices that steadily undermine a county's capacity to increase the supply of public goods. It is catastrophic governance that is mainly responsible for Africa's failure to realise its immense development potential, aided and abetted by external opportunists.

The attitude of the Nigerian government towards efforts to provide for international legislation that seeks to sanction corrupt practices is equally instructive in this regard. President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Nigerian head of state has let it be known that Nigeria has nothing to learn from the international code of behaviour for operators in the oil and gas industry under the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). As reported on the front page of the Vanguard Newspapers of Friday, February 20, 2004, the Nigerian head of state impatiently declared, "No foreigner can teach me about how to handle corruption."

The implication of this situation is that, very simply, official pronouncements are one thing; action to deal with the problem is quite another. In the process, corruption continues to be principal method for the acquisition of private wealth by members of Nigeria's ruling class. The critical issue that this raises is how to move from official pronouncements to actual change. To bring about movement on the issue, Joseph

(2003:14) has called for the “revolutionary transformation of African governance”. The question however is, who is to undertake such a revolutionary transformation of governance and by what means will it be brought about? These questions are important because it cannot be expected that those who profit the most from corruption will be interested in taking action to combat it.

For this reason, we believe that two sources of pressure for change are necessary: the one external, the other internal. The external sources of change must include all those external interests that are currently concerned, for whatever reason, about the consequences of corruption in the Nigerian situation. Already, we are aware that efforts are under way within the United Nations for some international legislation on corruption. These efforts must be speeded up and the legislation produced must not only provide for sanctions against political and economic corruption but also have a framework for the enforcement of the sanctions. Clearly, it should be possible for heads of government under whose rule corruption was seen to have increased to be declared criminals who can be arrested, tried and punished anywhere in the world. Also the efforts to force disclosures from Swiss and other foreign banks in relation to accounts that are suspected to hold looted public funds from the Third World must be given more substantive meaning.

Although ironic, it is on record that the multi-lateral institutions of global capitalism, especially the World Bank and IMF have expressed serious concerns about the high level of corruption in Nigeria. Thus both the World Bank and IMF have attempted to persuade the Nigerian government to adopt public accounting procedures that would lead to some level of transparency in the conduct of the financial affairs of government. Since the World Bank and the IMF have more influence with the Nigerian state than the Nigerian people, they are in the best position to actualise this concern by applying pressure on the Nigerian state to reduce the level of corruption. Thus a transparency index can be computed as currently done by Transparency International that would allow the World Bank and the IMF to withhold funds promised to the managers of the state.

Overall, while we expect that external measures will produce some results if properly and consistently applied, we believe that the greatest and most significant results will however have to come from internal sources of pressure. These sources include civil society and its organisations, the working class movement including organised labour, nationalists and radical political organisations. These forces must engage the Nigerian state and its external collaborators on a continuing basis through mass actions, demonstrations, strike actions, legal actions and the struggle for political power. Ultimately, the issues will be decided by the relationship that these groups have to the question of state power. This means that it will not be sufficient to engage in actions that seek to persuade members of the indigenous ruling class to ‘behave’. What will be sufficient will be a ‘revolutionary transformation of governance’ in Nigeria that transfers power from the indigenous ruling capitalist class to this set of forces.

Our analysis of the approaches favoured by the peoples of the Niger Delta has indicated what issues the alternative paradigm or framework for the resolution of the development problem in the Niger Delta must deal with. It must provide for true federalism, restoration of the environment, and change in the existing framework of rules and regulations that govern oil exploitation and appropriation activities. In

addition, resource control has to be addressed in a way that guarantees property rights and the legitimacy of the claims of the Niger Delta communities to payment of the ecological debt by the oil and gas companies operating in the Niger Delta. Finally, it must address the wars and the core issue of poverty and the poverty of infrastructures in the area.

Taken together, the views of the peoples of the Niger Delta indicate that what is required for addressing the underdevelopment problem in the Niger Delta must have political, economic and social content. In this regard, the best economic solutions that provide for massive economic and environmental rehabilitation of the area will still be inadequate if they have no political content. Political content, in fact, is the first requirement. This is because the economic objectives can only be realised within the context of a 'politically developed' Niger Delta. History has indeed shown that at given periods, economic development is made possible only when a social group or society has attained political development. This is precisely what informed the struggle for independence: namely the realisation that a colonising power could not be relied upon to commit itself even half-heartedly to the economic development of the colonised.

The issues of resource control, poverty eradication and environmental restoration cannot be resolved outside those of genuine federalism and the existence of strong and just governance institutions. Indeed, the will required to address the economic issues is strictly political in character. It is this will that can provide for change in the perceptions of the managers of the Nigerian state about the real developmental issues in the Niger Delta and the role of struggle and agitations led by such community organisations as MOSOP, the IYC, Chikoko Movement in the development process. It is also such political will that can lead the Nigerian state to end its war in the Niger Delta and to assert the interests of the Nigerian people over and above those of international capital in general and the oil and gas companies in particular.

13. Towards Movement and Action: Organisational Requirements

The peoples of the Niger Delta however, cannot expect that the Nigerian state, which has been involved in the underdevelopment of their region for decades, will take the initiative for righting past wrongs and building with it, a new future. The initiative for righting past wrongs must be taken by the peoples of the Niger Delta; they must provide the impetus and initiative for action by others. This creates an organisational requirement: they must create and sustain a movement.

It is necessary, as we have done previously to clarify that by the people of the Niger Delta, we refer to those social groups in the Niger Delta that are the victims rather than beneficiaries of the way and manner in which the gas and oil resources of the area have been exploited and expropriated over the years. As we have repeatedly emphasised, underdevelopment in the Niger Delta is experienced in different degrees depending upon the location of particular individuals and groups within the social division of labour. Thus the working class in the Niger Delta is the group that is most affected by the fact and consequences of underdevelopment. We have indeed shown that there are elements in the Niger Delta whose agitations for resource control are intended to provide them with a larger share of the cake baked with the blood of their

own people in their dealings with ruling class elements from outside the Niger Delta. This is one of the reasons why the so called South-South Platform organised by the Governors of the States in the Niger Delta cannot be a credible forum for articulating, let alone, realising the objectives of the struggle for reversing the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. The policies, actions, decisions and patterns of state expenditure in these states clearly indicate that the wielders of state power at this level are just as involved in the exploitation of the Niger Delta as are other sections of the ruling class in other parts of Nigeria. All sections of the ruling class in Nigeria, whether within or outside the Niger Delta are involved in the politics of oil for the primary purpose of the primitive accumulation of capital.

This is why the most critical element that must be inserted into the analysis of the problem of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta by the peoples of the Niger Delta and other interests that are sympathetic to the Niger Delta is that of indicating a process by which the proposed solutions may be given force and realised. Simply put, the question that has to be answered is, 'by what process will the implementation of the various solutions in their present or modified forms be guaranteed?' By a process, we mean who will own and drive the implementation of the needed set of solutions and by what means will such ownership be created and sustained? For example, there is as we have already observed, a lot of romanticisation of the role of local peoples in development; the World Bank and its sister agencies would want us to believe that the poor can think through and solve the problem of poverty by themselves if only they are empowered by funding NGOs to get them to narrate their experiences and needs through participatory research. On the basis of such authentic narrations, one community of the poor may be provided with a borehole, another a power generating set, and a third a clinic or access to micro-credits.

The fact, however, is that change of the kind required and, indeed, any major meaningful change in the Niger Delta, cannot come about through empowerment by narration, community research centres, micro-credits and the like. If these measures do not actually end up reinforcing existing injustices, or creating new ones, they are most likely to reinforce the faith of the people in the relations of power and dependence that currently bind and 'underdevelop' them. Reversing underdevelopment requires changing political relations and altering existing imbalances in power relationships in order to be able to redistribute opportunities and open up the islands of privilege to all in the society. The process of bringing about such changes requires building a movement of the underdeveloped. In turn, building such a movement requires creating a leadership that has the strategic mission and vision needed for undertaking the work at hand. This is what the experience of true nation building and of local or regional development in the old and new successful nations of the world shows.

The problem of the continued underdevelopment of the Niger Delta is not that there are no ideas about what alternative road needs to be travelled but that there is a painful shortage of travel guides who not only know the road but are working in unison and have the compassion and the commitment to keep the people on the road even when they feel like turning back, settling for where they already are, or, out of frustration, begin to set upon each other. The first and single most important requirement in an integrated framework for the development of the Niger Delta is recognising this need and indicating the process by which the requirement may be fulfilled.

The lessons of Isaac Adaka Boro and Ken Saro-Wiwa show how this may be done and at the same time, how it may not be done. Isaac Adaka Boro, Samuel Owonaru and Nottingham Dick established in early 1966, a Niger Delta Volunteer Force of a few inadequately prepared men and women and launched a war against the Nigerian state with the express purpose of establishing 'an all Ijaw Niger Delta Republic' (Darah, 2001:21). The Volunteer Force was hopelessly outnumbered and under-equipped to undertake a task that fired the imagination of all core Niger Delta peoples. The Volunteer Force was defeated, its leaders captured and sentenced to death on June 21, 1966 by the Nigerian state. But from the ashes of their struggle, Rivers State and Cross River State were created. More than two decades later, Ken Saro-Wiwa poked and fanned these ashes of history and started another blaze. This time, MOSOP which Ken Saro-Wiwa established also restricted itself to the particular historical abuses and hence claims of the Ogoni people, rather than to the general problems of the Niger Delta. Oyerinde (1998:67-68) has noted that following Ken Saro-Wiwa's efforts, MOSOP:

...a movement of world historic consequence was crystallized in Ogoni land. Its focus and tactics were defined in a Bill of Rights encased in the most efficiently simple terms. The broad spectrum of Ogoni society was organised by MOSOP into more than twenty different but co-ordinate platforms, each canvassing support for the bill of Rights within its constituency. There emerged Federation of Ogoni Women's Associations, Council of Ogoni Churches, Ogoni Teachers Union, National Union of Ogoni Students, Council of Ogoni Professionals, Youth Council of Ogoni and Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers. So total was the grip of MOSOP on Ogoni land that in less than four years of its formation it was able to pull a protest march involving an estimated 300,000 people; an event that was (unexceptional) for the discipline and quiet resolve the leadership was able to instill in the participants. MOSOP's clout was also amply deployed in the boycott of the June 12, 1993 Presidential Elections. It is a great credit to MOSOP that notwithstanding its boycott of that election, it joined other social movements and nationalities in challenging the military to respect the results. And even with the occupation of Ogoni land by the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force made up predominantly of Hausa and fringe-Hausa troops of peasant extraction, Ogoni people still heeded MOSOP's calls for protests.

MOSOP had admirers and supporters far beyond Ogoni land but it was in the end small, isolated and encircled by the superior arms of the Nigerian state and the transnational oil companies. Ken Saro-Wiwa and his several of compatriots were arrested and murdered in cold blood in November 1998 by the Nigerian state and the transnational oil companies. But they left behind and MOSOP is sustaining a legacy of struggle that has ignited the whole of the Niger Delta. The fruits of that struggle include a heightened level of awareness about environmental wrongs and exploitation in the Niger Delta, the emergence of various nationality and ethnic movements, the emergence of various NGOs specifically targeted on the problems of the Niger Delta, the creation of Bayelsa State and yet another OMPADEC in the form of a new NDDC by the Nigerian state, and a higher level of sophistication by the transnational oil companies in acting on the problems of the Niger Delta.

It is easy to imagine what could happen in the Niger Delta if a, "movement of world historic consequence whose focus and tactics were defined in a Bill of Rights encased in the most efficiently simple terms," and that organised the broad spectrum of Niger Delta society into more than twenty different but co-ordinate platforms, each canvassing support for the bill of Rights within its constituency was crystallised not in Ogoni land but in the whole of the Niger Delta. Such a movement would be able to force the special problem of development of the Niger Delta to the forefront of

interests of the Nigerian state. It would also be able to get the people of the Niger Delta to participate, as MOSOP did and is still doing in the case of the Ogoni people, in the process of development. It would help the peoples of the Niger Delta clarify the terms, content and levels of their participation. It would redefine development in a way that made it relevant and meaningful to the peoples and communities of the Niger Delta.

We therefore believe that there is an urgent need to build a movement in the Niger Delta that would lead the process of addressing the special problem of development in the Niger Delta. A movement grows from inside a society and therefore gathers driving forces, ownership and commitment from the very beginning from within such a society. A movement means that those who understand the most and therefore either directly or psychologically experience the situation of underdevelopment most clearly are origins and part of its driving forces. The initiative must therefore be anchored on a process that has to be led, not by undifferentiated and romanticised local communities but, by those who seeing the plight of the communities have on their own, without any prompting from outsiders, without the expectation of profit and personal gain of any sort and even at the risk of paying the supreme sacrifice, decided to launch the struggle for economic, political and social justice in the Niger Delta. Are there materials in and outside the Niger Delta today, from which such a movement can be constructed? We believe that there are. The working class movement in Nigeria is one of them. MOSOP is another one of them. The IYC (Ijaw Youth Congress) and Chikoko Movement are others. The Environmental Rights Action (ERA) organisation is still another as are branches of the CDHR and CLO operating in the area. So also are the hundreds of youth and community organisations and individuals in the various parts of the Niger Delta whose agenda is the social, economic and political transformation of their communities.

The work that will be involved in establishing such a movement will be a difficult but not an impossible one. The existing individual organisations must be assisted to focus on the fact that the 'garrisoning agenda' remains the real alternative of the Nigerian state for the 'development' of the Niger Delta. They must be reminded frequently about the evidence from their own history; namely that the strong alliance between local capitalism and international capitalism means that there will always be, at every point, a joint response by these parties to any action on the part of the Niger Delta people. The logic of this for all groups that are fighting for justice in the Niger Delta is that isolated, individual actions will continue to expose the communities of the Niger Delta to grave dangers. Thus only a united platform that involves all or most of the organisations of the people in the area can offer the most effective and successful challenge to the rapacious and vicious exploitation of the peoples and resources of the Niger Delta. What Vandana Shiva, (2001:262 quoted in Douglas and Okonta) an Indian environmentalist says in the case of the international movement for the environment has pointed relevance in this regard. As they put it:

If environmental activists try and act alone, without connecting up with movements for justice, movement for human rights, movements for democracy, they can be contained very easily, not just by backlash but also by polarisation, by constantly, making it look like the environmental interest is a secondary interest, whereas jobs and survival are the primary interests. This will be exacerbated by people refusing to recognise the environmental base is also a livelihood base, and environmental issues are tied very closely to economic survival. I think what is needed now very rapidly is broad-basing of our environmental work.

The movement for the development of the Niger Delta with its multifaceted problem of underdevelopment will need to build bridges with all groups that are committed to social and economic justice, gender justice, poverty eradication, environmental justice, democracy and development in the Niger Delta. It will need to promote the understanding and awareness that who kills the Niger Delta kills Nigeria.

This movement will need to be established by all the agents or leaders working for justice and peace in the Niger Delta. The agents will include:

...community leaders who over the years have distinguished themselves in honest and selfless service to the local people, in helping them to solve their social and economic problems, in criticizing the policies of the government and the oil companies and also calming the youths when, visited by yet another act of violence by the government, they go in the war path. These leaders are (also) to be found in the various ethnic and self-improvement unions and the various church denominations in the region. Another group is the youth leaders of the various ethnic nationality movements who have quietly emerged as the vocal representatives of their groups... (Okonta, 2000:115-116).

Such agents will also include individuals who are from outside the immediate community of the Niger Delta but who have adopted the standpoint of the oppressed in the Niger Delta as the basis for addressing the underdevelopment of the area. These individuals would include the, “heads of the various local and international NGOs working in the Niger Delta... and several other smaller NGOs working in the areas of environmental and human rights advocacy in the Delta...” (Okonta, 2000:115-116). They will also include working class elements – workers’ leaders, progressive intellectuals, patriots and anti-imperialists – from outside the Niger Delta. The movement in the Niger Delta must build strong bridges with these external forces that historically, have canvassed and struggled for their cause. Sometimes, the role that some of these external members may come to play may indeed be decisive but in all cases, it will mean that the external members have gone through some personal transformation or change equal to the kind of change or transformation that the movement seeks to bring about. They would function at a level that enables them understand and confront on behalf of and with the people of the Niger Delta, the worldview of members of those social classes whose logic of life and living daily develop the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta.

Weick has shown how the Solidarity Movement undermined, with the support of international capital, the socialist state of Poland. Using the strategy of ‘Small Wins’ the Solidarity Movement systematically undermined the authority of the socialist state in all areas of society. To do that however, Solidarity first had to be a movement. This means that while working individually to organise resistance, stage demonstrations, employ legal action and other strategies dictated by the current situation on the ground, all the groups and interests working for justice, true democracy and empowerment in the Niger Delta must place on the agenda the urgent task of combining their forces. For this to happen, there is as we have already acknowledged, the need to convene a Summit of the repressed, oppressed and poor peoples of the Niger Delta. This summit may need to be preceded by several mini-summits, which may proceed on the basis of areas of work (for example, the trade unions, NGOs, Nationality Movements, Youth Movements could each have a mini-summit) and geographical areas (for example, all trade unions, NGOs, Nationality Movements, Youth Movements in one state could hold a mini-summit). Whatever the case, the work of building a united front is urgent and must therefore come to the

forefront of the agenda of development within the community of the repressed and oppressed in the Niger Delta.

Marx noted that the dissolution of the feudal relations of production produced the capitalist class and the working class. The emergence of the two classes represented an advance in history. Today, the emergence of organised forms of resistance in opposition to the exploiting class of Nigerian rulers, their transnational capitalist collaborators and their ideological thought masters in the World Bank and IMF also represents a positive form of development in the Niger Delta. The oppositional forces must however never lose sight of the fact that the 'garrisoning agenda' remains the real alternative of the Nigerian state for the 'development' of the Niger Delta. They must also never lose sight of the evidence from their own history; namely that every concession from Nigerian rulers has always come as a result of agitations and struggles on their part. The strategy therefore must be to engage the Nigerian class of exploiters and their external collaborators at all times as a big, united movement. They must engage the Nigerian state at all times on true federalism, on revenue allocation and derivation, on governance institutions and values, on the environment, on the garrisoning agenda. That engagement must be such that it will force the Nigerian state and its collaborators not only to want to answer the question which Douglas has asked, 'Why are the people of the Niger Delta angry?' but to seek to advance just and lasting solutions to the answers that are bound to come; answers one of which would rightly be: 'They are angry because they have been systematically abused, violated and underdeveloped for more than a century for the profit of others'.

PART V. CONCLUSION

14. Conclusions

This discussion has attempted to provide an integrated approach to the development of the Niger Delta. As indicated at the beginning, the paradigm is integrative to the extent that it takes 'into account and therefore addresses within a single framework, both the justifiable and or justiceable interests of the various groups of people in the situation and the multidimensional nature of the 'problem of development' in the Niger Delta.' It is necessary to understand, however, that no matter how robust it is, the alternative paradigm of development outlined here cannot provide or be regarded as a blueprint for the development of the Niger Delta. As Claude Ake (2001:124-125) has correctly observed:

A paradigm in this context can only be about the logic, the values, the principles and the general path of movement, a theoretical structure of experience whose practical operation will vary depending upon the historical circumstances of (the Niger Delta). To be sure, some details will be needed for clarity. However, the paradigm cannot rest on the validity of such "facts"; its validity depends initially on its logic, its principles, and its grasp and articulation of the problem. This is not to deny that its ultimate vindication depends on the success or failure of those who practice it; but that is another matter. It is important to remember that the logic, principles, and values of the paradigm are neither arbitrary constructs nor abstractions; they are derived from, indeed determined by the problem... Therefore, (the) constitution (of the paradigm) as well as its relevance depend crucially on the nature of the problem.

In a fundamental sense therefore, the process of the formulation and clarification of the problem is, perhaps, the most important part of the development of the alternative paradigm. This clarification has shown that:

- Development is the process by which the members of a social group increase their sense of well-being not only under circumstances of their own choosing but also under conditions of justice;
- The nature of the problem of development in the Niger Delta is that of underdevelopment;
- The problem of underdevelopment is a result of the specific manner in which the Nigerian state in active collaboration with international capital in the oil industry have consciously sought to exploit, expropriate and appropriate the oil and gas resources of the Niger Delta communities;
- This form of exploitation has led to several consequences that compound the ordinary forms in which underdevelopment may be expressed. Thus a state of war exists, besides the generalised poverty for the mass of the people, in the Niger Delta. On the one hand, this war is being waged by the Nigerian state against the people of the Niger Delta; on the other hand, it is being waged by several of the communities within and between themselves;
- The Niger Delta not only has a fractured social structure; its ruling elites are in active collaboration with the Nigerian state in the looting of its resources;
- There is a major ecological crisis in the Niger Delta that involves all aspects of the ecosystem;

- The efforts of the Nigerian state and the transnational oil companies to address the problem of development in the Niger Delta have largely been based upon a distorted and self-serving statement and analysis of the problem. As a result of this, the efforts have served to further reinforce the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta peoples;
- The views of external agencies and institutions outside of Nigeria such as the World Bank, the United Nations and even some Western governments especially the European Union and the United States of America are also largely self-serving. These views deliberately mask the political nature of the problem and advance a solution agenda that leaves the mode of the exploitation of the Niger Delta peoples unchanged.

On the basis of the above analysis, we have proceeded to suggest an alternative, integrative paradigm for the development of the Niger Delta. This alternative paradigm is premised upon the views of the progressive forces in and outside the Niger Delta. These views are in agreement that while the Niger Delta needs economic and social measures for its development, it requires first and most of all political justice: the end of the war by the Nigerian state, the return to true federalism, the righting of environmental wrongs through a system of justice that heals the violated and punishes the violators. It is within such an enabling political context that special agencies for development, empowerment through participatory research, micro-projects and micro-credits can have relevance. It is also within such an environment that resource control can be addressed in a way that guarantees property rights and the legitimacy of the claims of the Niger Delta communities to payment of the ecological debt by the oil and gas companies operating in the Niger Delta. To push the envelope of the measures and actions needed, we have indicated a fundamental requirement: building a movement in the Niger Delta that unites all the individuals, groups and organisations currently engaged in one form of action or protest to obtain justice for the repressed and oppressed in the Niger Delta. Such a movement would lead the process of addressing the special problem of development in the Niger Delta. The initiative for establishing such a movement must come from those who seeing the plight of the communities have on their own, without any prompting from outsiders, without the expectation of profit and personal gain of any sort and even at the risk of paying the supreme sacrifice, decided to launch the struggle for economic, political and social justice in the Niger Delta. This means that while working individually to organise resistance, stage demonstrations, employ legal action and other strategies dictated by the current situation on the ground, all the groups and interests working for justice, true democracy and empowerment in the Niger Delta must place on the agenda the urgent task of combining their forces.

In fashioning any framework for the development of the Niger Delta, we must never forget the words of Ken Saro-Wiwa (see appendix) just before he was sentenced to death by the farcical judicial commission set up under Justice Auta by the Abacha military dictatorship.

Appendix

The words of Ken Saro-Wiwa just before he was sentenced to death:

“My Lord, since my arrest on the 21st of May, 1994 I have been subjected to physical and mental torture, held incommunicado and denied food for weeks and medical attention for months. My seventy-four year old mother has been whipped and arrested, my wife beaten and threatened with detention, the three telephone lines to my office and my residence cut and they remain cut to this day, my office and home have been ransacked on three different occasions and personal and family property, official and documents taken away without documentation.

I have been calumniated in the press and on satellite television before the world by a Rivers State government anxious to prejudice the mind of the public and to convince the public of my guilt even before trial. Only recently, before the United Nations Committee for the Eradication of Racism and Discrimination in Geneva, an official delegation of the Federal Government which included the Special Adviser on Legal Affairs to the Head of State, Professor Yadudu, declared me responsible for the murders which are the subject of this Tribunal, even before the Tribunal has found anything against me or anyone else.

The fact that a case of homicide is being charged before a Tribunal set up under Decree No. 2 of 1987 speaks for itself. I am aware of the many strictures laid against the decree and this Tribunal by local and international observers. All the same, I have followed the proceeding here with keen and detailed interest, not only because I am charged before this Tribunal, but also because, as a writer, I am a custodian of the conscience of society. I regret that the legal counsel I freely chose, Gani Fawehinmi, the human rights hero and pride of the country, was forced to withdraw. His withdrawal has denied credibility to this trial.

My Lord, we all stand before history. I am a man of peace, of ideas. Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalisation and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living and determined to usher in to this country as a whole a fair and just democratic system which protects every one and every ethnic group and gives us all a valid claim to human civilisation, I have devoted all my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief and from which I cannot be blackmailed or intimidated. I have no doubt at all about the ultimate success of my cause, no matter the trials and tribulations which I and those who believe with me may encounter on our journey. No imprisonment or death can stop our ultimate victory.

I repeat that we all stand before history. I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial. Shell is here on trial and it is as well that it is represented by counsel said to be holding a watching brief. The

company has, indeed, ducked this particular trial, but its day will surely come and the lessons learnt here may prove useful to it for there is no doubt in my mind that the ecological war the company has waged in the Delta will be called to question sooner than later and the crimes of that war be duly punished. The crime of the Company's dirty war against the Ogoni people will also be punished.

On trial also is the Nigerian nation, its present rulers and all those who assist them. Any nation which can do to the weak and disadvantaged what the Nigerian nation has done to the Ogoni, loses a claim to independence and to freedom from outside influence. I am not one of those who shy away from protesting injustice and oppression, arguing that they are expected of a military regime. The military do not act alone. They are supported by a gaggle of politicians, lawyers, judges, academics, and businessmen, all of them hiding under the claim that they are only doing their duty, men and women too afraid to wash their pants of their urine.

We all stand on trial my Lord, for by our actions we have denigrated our country and jeopardized the future of our children. As we subscribe to the sub-normal and accept double standards, as we lie and cheat openly, as we protect injustice and oppression, empty our classrooms, degrade our hospitals, as we protect injustice and oppression, fill our stomachs with hunger and elect to make ourselves subservient to those who subscribe to higher standards, pursue the truth, and honour justice, freedom and hard work.

I predict that the scene here will be played and replayed by generations yet unborn. Some have already cast themselves in the role of villains, some are tragic victims, some still have a chance to redeem themselves. The choice is for each individual.

I predict that a denouement of the riddle of the Niger Delta will soon come. The agenda is being set for this trial. Whether the peaceful ways favoured will prevail depends on what the oppressor decides, what signals it sends out to the waiting public.

In my innocence of the false charges I face here, in my utter conviction, I call upon the Ogoni people, the peoples of the Niger Delta, and the oppressed minorities of Nigeria to stand up now and fight fearlessly and peacefully for their rights. History is on their side, God is on their side. For the Holy Quran says in Sura 42, verse 41: 'All those who fight when oppressed incur no guilt, but Allah shall punish the oppressor.' Come the day."

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