

THE MYTH OF MILITANCY: JUXTAPOSING THE OBJECTIVES OF MOVEMENT FOR EMANCIPATION OF NIGER DELTA (MEND) AGAINST CONTEMPORARY REALITIES IN THE NIGER DELTA

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Abstract

The study examined the environmental degradation resulting from the nature of oil exploration in the Niger Delta since the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in 1956. It assessed the objectives of the Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) against the contemporary realities in the region. We anchored our analysis on the Marxian theory of social production and reproduction while secondary data were collected from documentary sources and analyzed via qualitative descriptive method. The study found that following the failure of peaceful agitation adopted by the oil bearing communities to actualize their demand for adequate compensation for environmental degradation caused by oil exploration and for fair share of oil revenue, people resorted to militancy. Consequently, various intervention programmes were put in place by the government to meet the demands of the people. However, empirical evidence shows that these government intervention programmes failed to meet the demands of the oil bearing communities and militant groups. Similarly, despite the high level militancy, MEND as a militant group has not achieved its stated objectives. It is expected that agitations and demonstrations would continue in the Niger Delta and will continue to disrupt oil exploration in the region. Based on our findings, we recommend inter alia that the government and International Oil Companies (IOCs) should collaborate with the local communities to evolve long term

development programme that does not only focus on giving out funds to Commissions set up by government but would specify how to gainfully engage and support the local people to continue in their agricultural activities without being disrupted by environmental degradation resulting from oil exploration by IOCs.

Key words: Niger Delta; oil exploration; environmental degradation; militancy; MEND

Introduction

Crude oil is an essential non-renewable resource which constitutes about one-third of global energy consumption and therefore remains one of the most strategic resources in global economy and international politics (BP, 2012 in Balthasar, 2014). Currently, the world consumes about 75 million barrels of crude oil daily with every indication of doubling the number in the next two decades (Ifesinachi & Azom, 2012). This strategic importance of crude oil has made it a highly priced commodity and nations blessed with it in commercial quantity have continued to depend on it as a major source of revenue.

Nigeria is one of such states that have continued to depend on rents from oil as her major source of revenue since the 1956 discovery of oil in commercial quantity in Oloibiri in the Niger Delta region of country by Shell-BP (Okoli, 2015). Today, Nigeria is 8th largest crude oil producer in Africa and has the 6th largest gas reserve in the world (Okoli, 2015). Meanwhile, The Niger Delta region comprises the six states of the South-South region of the country, namely: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers; and three others - Ondo (South Western Nigeria), Abia and Imo States (South East). Together, these states are referred to as the oil

producing states because of the large concentration of oil deposits with several oil companies producing from about 150 oil fields located in the region (Okonta & Douglas, 2001). More so, fishing and agriculture are the major occupation of the Niger Delta people (UNDP, 2006), because the region is also blessed with fertile agricultural land, forests, rivers, creeks, and coastal waters teeming with fish and sundry water creatures.

Paradoxically, the discovery and exploration of oil in the Niger Delta have undermined the traditional occupation (fishing and agriculture) of the people due to the environmental hazards associated with oil exploitation. Much as Nigeria generates over 80% of its revenue from oil rents which also accounts for over 90% of the country's total export (KPMG Nigeria, 2014), the Niger Delta region remains in a deplorable condition in terms of infrastructure and basic social amenities. The huge oil revenue has not translated to enhancement of the overall wellbeing of the inhabitants in the oil bearing communities. In fact, Ibeanu (2008) has described the paradox in Niger Delta as a juxtaposition of affluence and affliction because the oil wealth in the region creates affluence for few Nigerians and the IOCs and unleashes affliction on the Niger Delta communities.

Statement of the Problem

This paradox in the Niger Delta has resulted in the rise in incidence of militancy in the region. Essentially, the failure of the Nigerian state to meet the expectation of the people and compensate them for the lost opportunities resulting from oil exploration in the region have resulted in ill feeling and agitation by the local communities. Unfortunately, the Nigerian state responded to the agitation of people by attempting to use state's apparatus of force to repress and silence such agitation so as to ensure uninterrupted flow of oil rent to

the state. This use of force by the state proved to be counterproductive as it has only ignited more violent agitation from the local communities leading to the proliferation of militias. The *modus operandi* of these militia groups shows that while some of the militia groups seek to express the grievances of the people and to get the government address such grievances, some others attempt to exploit the violent situation to sabotage the government and make economic gains for its members (see Ibeanu, 2008; Obi-Ani, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

In the light of the foregoing, this study contributes by tracing the origin and *raison d'être* of MEND which is a major militant groups in the Niger Delta. The study locates MEND within the context of the social struggle for the accumulation and distribution of economic surplus emanating from the oil rich Niger Delta and assesses whether MEND has achieved its central objective in the light of the current situation in the Niger Delta.

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspective

In explicating the link between conflict and natural resources in the periphery, the neo-classical scholars tend to ignore the character of the state, the social relations of production existing within the state and nature of contradictions emanating therefrom. Conversely, Marxian analysis have a well-established body of knowledge that explains the contradictions and struggles attendant to material production in class society. The Marxian school focused on the composition of social forces, the prevailing modes of production, the nature of social relations and the corresponding struggles that inform, define and drive the general movement of the economy.

In the light of the foregoing, the theoretical perspective we employ in understanding the emergence of MEND and its *raison d'être* is

the theory of social production and reproduction akin to what Marxian scholarship refers to as socio-economic system (see Abalkin, Dzarasov and Kulijoy, 1983 as cited in Okolie, 2012).

Hence, the basic proposition of the theory of social production and reproduction revolves around the fact that the fundamental concern of human beings, and perhaps of other living things, is survival and security. Expounding on the theory of social production and reproduction, Ogbn-Iyam (2005) noted that for man to survive and have security, he must produce and reproduce human needs, including the production and reproduction of humankind. It is also accepted as self-evident that meaningful production and reproduction of human needs is essentially social. Therefore, every social relation needs to be a full or partial social production and reproduction relation in full and/or in part of tangibles and intangibles such as food, shelter, medicine, new human being etc. These tangible and intangible values and interests revolve around life processes and vary in their perceived importance to various people at various points in time. Again, complete social production and reproduction of any value often entails political, economic, sociological, religious, psychological, physical and technical factors and dimensions almost at the same time or sequentially. In other words, social production and reproduction system involves virtually every aspect of life (Ogban-Iyam, 2005).

In every social production and reproduction system there must be someone or people to make binding decisions on what is produced, distributed, exchanged, and/or consumed by who and for who. Those who decide what to produce when, how, where, by who and for who, also control the social production process and in their favour. They generally

have the most of what is produced and they are often more satisfied than the others with the production system and tend to protect it. Conversely, those who do not influence or decide what to produce generally have the least of what is produced. Those who are satisfied with the production system struggle to retain the system while those that are not satisfied struggle to alter the system (Ogban-Iyam, 2005; Okolie, 2012).

The capitalist system of social production and redistribution driven by profit motive dominates the global economy, generating its conflicts and poverty because only a few controls the production process leaving out the majority of the working people poor. Although capitalism has generated great wealth and knowledge unlike any other system of social production hitherto known to man, it has also generated greater inequality, displacement, poverty and food shortages as wealth and power are increasingly privatized. Hence, Ogban-Iyam (2005:45 as cited in Okolie, 2012) observed that:

The current challenge to any modern polity is how to (1) adapt communal society production to the current large scale societies or polities or (2) how to transform a capitalist social labour to social products and no longer private product in which a majority rules or (3) to transform a socialist production system to a communal social production system in which a majority rules or (4) how to carry out a combination of 1 and above where the majority are recessive and dominated by communal social production and minority of its citizens capitalist social production system.

In further explanation of the dynamics of production process inherent in peripheral capitalist states, Ekekwe (1985) noted that the prevailing capitalist mode of production throw up social classes that are involved in continuous struggle over the disposal of surplus through the use of political power. With respect to the contemporary peripheral social formations, Ekekwe (1985) posited that their states are dominated by international capital, with peripheral bourgeoisie as allies. He further emphasized that the state plays an important role in fostering the accumulation of wealth by the peripheral bourgeoisie. In the course of appropriation and distribution of surplus by the peripheral capitalist state, labour (the working class including farmers) is not only denied of the benefits of the surplus which it substantially produced, but also seen by the dominant class, and used by the state as a means of generating capital only. Essentially, the theory of social production and reproduction indicates that in every capitalist society, few groups of people appropriates surplus emanating from the production process while a large chunk suffer deprivation, this engenders conflict within the society.

It is in the light of this theory that we attempt to analyze the emergence of MEND as a social force that emerged to resist the exploitation, neglect and degradation of the Niger Delta environment which results from the symbiotic relationship between the petty bourgeoisie who control the Nigerian state and the IOCs operating in the region.

Oil exploration and Environmental degradation in Niger Delta

Oil production began in the Niger Delta in 1958 after the discovery of oil in commercial quantity by Shell-BP at Oloibiri in 1956. The continuous massive exploitation of oil resources in the Niger Delta led to the displacement of agriculture as a major source of revenue to the Federal government of

Nigeria by the 1970s. Thus, the oil industry is today the largest sector in terms of revenue generation for the government. Meanwhile, the oil industry is divided into three – the downstream, upstream and services sector. The upstream sector is characterized by exploration and production of crude oil and gas, the downstream sector is characterized mainly by transmission/conveyance, refining, distribution and marketing, while the oil service sector deals with various support services such as drilling, construction, maintenance etc provided for smooth oil exploration. The upstream sector stands out as the most important sector of the oil industry from where the government earns about 80% of its revenue, it also accounts for over 90% of the country's export (KPMG Nigeria, 2014).

Upstream oil exploration in Nigeria is regulated by various legal frameworks which define the nature and extent of involvement of the government and the International Oil Companies (IOCs), and more importantly, how the revenue from the exploration is shared among the parties. Some of the oil exploration agreements between the government and IOCs in Nigeria includes: the Joint Venture Agreement (JVA), Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), Service Contract (SC), and Marginal Field Concession (MFC) between the Nigerian government and International Oil Companies (IOCs) operating in the country. Essentially, these arrangements shows a form of partnership which enables the IOCs to carryout exploration, share the oil or revenue therefrom with the government according to agreed ratio. The most important thing is that there exist symbiotic interest between the government and the IOCs because they both benefit from the oil revenue and would do everything to protect the continuous flow of such revenue. Table 1 below shows Nigeria's equity shares in leading IOCs operating in the country.

Table 1: Nigeria's Equity Shares in Leading International Oil Companies Operating in the Country

S/N	Oil Company	Equity Share Holding	Operator	Share of National Production
1	Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC)	NNPC =55% Shell = 30% Elf=10% Agip=5%	Shell	42.0%
2	Mobil Producing Nigeria	NNPC =60% Mobil = 40%	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: Cullied from Abutudu & Garuba (2011) Natural Resource Governance and EITI Implementation in Nigeria. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikanstitute

Although, oil exploration is profitable to the country as a whole when viewed from the backdrop of revenue the government earns from it, oil exploration presents some risks and environmental hazards for the oil bearing communities. Generally, some of the environmental impacts of oil exploration have been documented by Orubu, Odusola & Ehwarieme (2004) as presented in table 2.

Table 2: Oil Operations and their Impacts on the Environment

S/N	Activity	Actual and Potential Environmental Impact
1	Exploration - including geological surveys and geophysical investigations	Destruction of forest land, vegetation and farm land/human settlement. Noise pollution and vibration from seismic shooting. Effects on animals and nearby settlers (on shore) and on fisheries (near/offshore).
2	Drilling	Accumulation of toxic materials from drilling materials, oil pollution of the sea, beaches or land. Destruction of fisheries production. Destruction of breeding ground for some marine fisheries. Pollution of underground water (waste pots). Adverse health effect on humans, social tension arising from compensation disagreements from accidental spills from locations.
3	Production Process a. Platforms and tank farms b. Gas flaring	Water pollution from salinity waste, used lubricating oil and solid waste. Main effects on marine life. Air pollution from gas and processing evaporation and flaring. Production of heat which kills vegetation around the heat area. Suppression of the growth and flowering of some plants.
4	Oil Spillage	Destruction of farmland, fishery and aquatic resources and mangrove ecosystem. Water pollution.
5	Tanker loading, location (onshore and offshore)	Water pollution from ballast and tank washing. Deck drainage, spillage during loading operation with consequential effects on the fauna and flora. Disruption of seabed by dredging (i.e. canalization). Land pollution from effluent water and solid waste of chemical cans and drums. Destruction of farmland for the establishment of storage depots, water pollution from effluent water. Air pollution from gaseous fumes during loading.
6	Storage Depot	Disruption of the sea-bed by dredging for pipeline installation. Sedimentation along pipeline routes. Water pollution from consequences of leaks from fracturing or breaking of pipe caused by metal fatigue, trawlers and dredgers or sea floor failures and sabotage.
7	Transportation	

Source: Cullied from Orubu, Odusola & Ehwarieme (2004)

As a result of these environmental costs of oil exploration, there are international environmental regulations and standards

within which oil explorations are expected take place. Some of the international regulations are contained in conventions and treaties such as: The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Seas by Oil 1945 as amended 1962; International Convention Relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties 1969; Convention on the Prevention of marine Pollution for Dumping of Wastes and other matters, 1972; UN International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights 1966; African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1968, International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness Response and Co-operation, (OPRC, 90) etc (see Umzurike, 2006). Accordingly, the Nigerian government has ratified most of series of municipal legislations regulating oil exploration, the latest and the most comprehensive being the Environmental Guidelines and Standards for the Petroleum Industry in Nigeria (EGASPIN) revised in 2002. EGASPIN provides the framework for environmental policy and management in the petroleum industry in Nigeria today under the EGASPIN, oil spill which is a major source of environmental degradation has been given adequate attention. For instance, EGASPIN requires oil companies to inspect pipelines monthly to prevent equipment failure and make accurate information available to the public and the authorities. Specifically, Part VIII of EGASPIN, 2002 provides that:

After a spill occurs, oil companies must:

- Submit an Environmental Evaluation Report on the oil spill to a panel of experts from the DPR and the operator.
- If water is affected underground, inform the DPR within 24 hours. An Initial Remediation Action Plan should be activated to prevent contamination, assess the contamination on site and

then start “recovery, treatment, monitoring and rehabilitation programmes”.

- Keep a daily log of events until the clean-up is concluded;
- Submit the costs of the clean-up to DPR

Analysis

This study uses secondary data. Therefore, the analysis of data will be done thematically by presenting and explaining key tables that are relevant to the study.

Results

Table 3 presents reported cases oil spill and the estimated quantity of oil spilt in the environment. Table 4 provides data on gas produced and flared by IOCs in Nigeria. Table 5 further present details of the major causes of oil spills in the Niger Delta region.

Table 3: Reported cases of Oil Spill in the Niger Delta

S/N	Date	Episode	State	Quantity in Barrels
1	1978	GOCON Escravos spill		300,000
2	July, 1979	Forcados Terminal oil spillage	Bende	570000
3	Jan. 1980	Funiwa Well blow-out	Rivers	400000
	Jan. 1980	Offshore well-blow out	Rivers	200000
3	May 1980	Oyakama Oil spillage	Rivers	10000
4	Nov. 1982	Warri-Kaduna pipeline rupture at Abudu-Edo	Edo	18000
5	August, 1983	Oshika Oil spill	Rivers	10000
6	Jan. 1998	Idoho oil spill	Akwa-Ibom	40000
7	Jan. 1998	Jones Creek oil spill	Delta	21548
8	Oct. 1998	Jesse oil spill	Delta	10000
9	May, 2000	Etama oil spill	Bayelsa	11000
	June 2001	Oil Spill at Oghodo,	Rivers State	26500 barrels
10	Dec, 2003	Aghada oil spill	Rivers	Unknown
11	Aug. 2004	Ewan oil spill	Ondo	Unknown
12	August, 2005	Ughelli oil spill	Delta	10000
	August and December, 2008	Oil Spill at Bodo in Ogoniland,	Rivers State	280,000

Source: Collected from Nwilo and Badajo, (2005)

Table 3 above somewhat suggest that despite the provisions of EGASPIN and other related

regulations guiding oil exploration, the IOCs and Nigerian government represented by NNPC has continued to exploit oil in the Niger Delta while flaunting the regulations with impunity. For example oil spill and gas flaring remain frequent occurrence in the Niger Delta.

Table 4: Gas Produced and Flared by Major Oil Companies in Nigeria, 2008-2012

Company Name	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Gas Produced	800689283	783905871	735315476	544285752	704908805
Gas Flared	97879670	96967320	163405866	278585613	251595477
%of Gas Flared	12.22	12.69	22.22	51.18	
MOBILE:					
Gas Produced	427115491	464537132	491110702	410774385	386528653
Gas Flared	130586764	183528046	2100262922	127725132	178540951
%of Gas Flared	31	40		31.09	46.19
HEYRON:					
Gas Produced	243040550	162780356	235249063	209195718	218500008
Gas Flared	156195278	101186784	192602299	151813350	129965063
%of Gas Flared	64.3	85.14	82	72.57	59.48
TOTAL E&P:					
Gas Produced	320372636	289817162	218968851	110841990	267618405
Gas Flared	96353534	33842081	64224402	41216205	88349281
%of Gas Flared	33	11.7	29.33	37.18	33.01
Gas Produced	293668636	320927714	723716209	360881021	414735714
Gas Flared	96353534	108696157	109926431	195712166	165572804
%of Gas Flared	33	33.9	26	52.71	39.92
TEXACO:					
Gas Produced	4803727	2479303	5941278	29162253	12341979
Gas Flared	4746874	2421926	5828277	29010520	12217702
%of Gas Flared	99	98	98.1	99.48	98.99
PAN OCEAN:					
Gas Produced	21752432	NA	3944139	20980252	24839066
Gas Flared	21211546	NA	3756324	19942691	23656657
%of Gas Flared	98	NA	95.24	95.05	95.24

NNPC (2013) Annual Statistical Bulletin. Abuja: NNPC

Table 5: Major Causes of Oil Spills in the Niger-Delta, 2008-2013

Causes of Spill	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Sabotage	220	252	258	54	44	27
Operational	36	20	10	6	39	33
Maintenance						
Equipment	165	125	96	18	42	38
Failure						
Corrosion	60	41	43	9	28	22
Yet to be	8		4	0	6	9
Determined						
Others	69	81	48	12	47	63

Source: NOSDRA (2013) Oil Spill Report. Abuja: NOSDRA

The major problem with these oil spills is that months after the incidents, the IOCs still fail to carry out clean-up of the affected areas as provided by the law which requires the IOCs to report and begin clean-up within 24hrs of oil spill incidence. A good example, is the widely reported oil spill incidents in Bodo, Ogoniland in 2008 where a fault in the Trans-Niger pipeline resulted in oil spill in Bodo, Ogoniland August 28, 2008 and 7

December 2008. Investigation by Joint Investigation Visit (JIV) revealed that the spill was specifically caused weld defect in the pipeline. In the first incident of 28 August, the spill was allowed to continue and oil poured into the surrounding swamp and creek for about 10 weeks and was only stopped on 7 November, 2008. Experts consulted by a UK legal firm estimated that as much as 4,000 barrels of oil a day were leaking from the pipe (Amnesty International, 2011), this implies that 280,000 barrels of oil must have spilled during the period. Similarly, the second spill incident of 7 December which was admitted by SPDC to have been caused by equipment failure as a result of natural corrosion was also not stopped for a long period thereby allowing large quantity of oil to spill into the environment (Amnesty International, 2011).

The implication of these oil spills and gas flaring are multi-facted, in addition to the destruction of flora and fauna in the Niger Delta region, they impact negatively on the health of the inhabitants of the communities. Pollution arising from oil spillage destroys marine life and crops, makes water unsuitable for fishing and renders many hectares of farmland unusable, even the sands are being destroyed by the oil spill as the communities cannot use the land for building. Further, water pollution kills fish and damages the ability of fish to reproduce thereby leading to immediate long-term destruction of fish stocks in the region. For instance, when oil and wastes are discharged into an enclosed body of water, fishes can die as a result of being directly exposed to pollutants. Fish eggs and larvae are also affected and the mangroves which are important for breeding of fish are seriously damaged. Flaring gas and high pressure oil pipelines that form a mesh across farmlands are conducive to acid rains, deforestation and destruction of wildlife. Again, flora and fauna are generally also endangered by dumping of toxic, non-biodegradable by-products from oil exploration and production (Ibeanu, 2008). Generally, oil spills destroy the general habitat and

make the environment inhabitable for living things. For instance, the recent widely reported 2008 oil spills at Bodo, Ogoniland led to the destruction of water and all aquatic lives in the affected environment, the air in the area was reported to have been polluted also thereby making breathing difficult for humans in the area (Amnesty International, 2011).

Emergence and Objectives of MEND

The environmental degradation and the consequent destruction of source of livelihood of the oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta led to the agitation by the people for compensation and resource ownership amongst others. The strategy of hostage taking and kidnapping was resorted to by the Niger Delta militants following failure of government and IOCs to address the grievances of the people expressed via various peaceful channels such as peaceful demonstration and advocacy. For instance, in the 1990s Ken Saro-Wiwa attempted a more peaceful agitation for compensation for environmental damage caused by oil drilling and a greater share of oil revenues. The strategy of Ken Saro-Wiwa led group was largely nonviolent opposition to the perceived injustices perpetrated upon the people of the Niger Delta by the government and the IOCs.

Saro-Wiwa's appeal for greater autonomy incurred the wrath of Nigeria's then military regime. Consequently, Saro-Wiwa and his followers were sentenced to death by the government and hanged (Adeyemo and Olu-Adeyemi, 2010). The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other non-violent activists proved to the Niger Delta youths that the non-violent strategy may not lead to the realization of their demands. As a result, the Niger Delta youths became radicalized and began an armed campaign and demand for greater control of the oil resources from their land. Meanwhile, unlike the armed resistance movements in some countries, the Niger Delta gangs are not one organization operating under a common

leadership. Rather, what exist in the Niger Delta are loose gangs of several aggrieved armed factions. Generally, the guiding objectives of the Niger Delta militants, which converge with those of the Niger Delta leaders, have been articulated to include the following:

- a. A restructuring of the Nigerian state and its federalism in such ways that guarantee self determination, political autonomy and fiscal control, true federalism, community control over development strategies, protection of land, dignity, culture, freedom, environment and natural resources of the Niger Delta people, and the right of states and communities to resource control;
- b. A broad based development programme to transform the region;
- c. A political autonomy that guarantees political participation, representation and community participation in resource management;
- d. Implementation of a minimum of 50% derivation;
- e. A halt to the development of a new oil and gas pending the complete clean up of the environment;
- f. Achievement of self determination and resource control to be addressed through a sovereign National Conference of ethnic nationalities (Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye & Okhonmina, 2007)

It is against this backdrop that the emergence of Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is appreciated. MEND emerged in 2005 following series of meetings between representatives from the Federation of Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), the Niger

Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), fighters from various cult groups such as Klansmen Konfraternity (KK), and Greenlanders (Kimiebi, 2010). The guiding objective of MEND was to expose the exploitation and repression of the oil bearing communities in Niger Delta by the IOCs and Nigerian government and by so doing, seek control of oil resources in the Niger Delta and secure reparations from the government and IOCs for environmental degradation caused by oil exploration in the region.

To achieve its objectives and goals, the group adopts the strategy of attacking oil installations, kidnap and hostage taking of oil company workers in the region. Table 6 shows selected cases of attacks and kidnap incidence attributed to MEND.

Table 6: Selected Cases of Oil Installations Attacks and Hostage Taking by MEND

S/N	Date	Incidents	Number of people kidnapped	Group Responsible
2	February 18, 2006	MEND rebels attack an oil barge and seize 9 hostages: 3 Americans, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thais, a Filipino, and a Britan	9	MEND
6	May 1, 2007	MEND seized six expatriate workers from an offshore oil facility owned by <u>Chevron</u> . The group of six consisted of four Italians, an American and a Croat. On the same day, MEND published photos of the captives seated on white plastic chairs in a wooden shelter around the remains of a campfire	6	MEND
7	May 3, 2007	MEND seized eight foreign h ostages from another offshore vessel	8	MEND
8	May 25, 2007	The pipe lay barge LB300 (owned by <u>Transcostal Off Shore</u>) was attacked a few hundred meters off the <u>Sargana</u> community coastline, near the Aunty Juli Platform. A South African, four Britons and Americans, and one Nigerian were kidnapped. All were employees of <u>Hydrodive</u> . The hostages were held for 19 days in basic conditions and were on occasions subjected to <u>mock executions</u> . MEND claimed responsibility and at one point announced to the national press that all the hostages were to be executed.	6	MEND
16	Dec. 17, 2012	Five Indian sailors aboard the <u>SP Brussels</u> were kidnapped by M.E.N.D. militants	5	MEND
17	Dec 20, 2012	4 South Korean oil workers were kidnapped by MEND gunmen from an oil plant in the Niger Delta	4	MEND

Source: Compiled by Researcher from <http://www.wikipedia> (Retrieved 12 October, 2015)

Juxtaposing Objectives and Realities

As noted earlier, MEND set out to enhance the wellbeing of the oil bearing communities by ensuring that they get fair share of proceeds

from oil while ensuring that an end is put to environmental degradation caused by oil companies through adopting international best practices. However, by adopting the strategy of sabotage in the form of pipeline vandalization, MEND contributed to the oil spill incidence in the Niger Delta region. As seen in table 5, sabotage is the single major cause of oil spill in the region. Further, the strategy of kidnapping adopted by the group worsened the security situation in the region leading to indiscriminate arrest and incarceration of innocent youths in various communities.

Again, the intervention programmes initiated by the government did not also translate to actualization of objectives of MEND. For instance, with return to civil rule in 1999, the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo inaugurated the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in December 2000, to address the grievances of the oil bearing communities by focusing on the following:

- Development of social and physical infrastructures;
- Technology;
- Economic/environmental remediation and stability;
- Human development;
- Pursuit of a peaceful environment that allows tourism to thrive and supports a buoyant culture (UNDP, 2006:31).

Since the establishment of NDDC, billions of naira has been channeled to the development of the oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta so as to reduce agitation and militancy. Within the first five years of its establishment, about US\$400 million was channeled by the federal government through the NDDC for development of the Niger Delta region. Table 7 presents data on annual federal government allocation to the NDDC for the development of the region.

Table 7: Federal Government Annual Allocation to NDDC

S/N	Year	Allocation US\$ (millions)
	2000	7.3
	2001	77.5
	2002	107.8
	2003	69.8
	2004	108.5
	Total	370.9

Source: Culled from UNDP 2006

With the assumption of President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua to office in 2007, his government first created the Ministry of the Niger Delta and thereafter offered Amnesty programme to the militants in the Niger Delta region with a view to addressing the aspirations of the people. The Amnesty programme for militants in the Niger Delta region was introduced in 2009 with a vision of engaging the militants in gainful employment, and reducing the abject poverty and deprivation in the region. With the introduction of the Amnesty programme, the militants were given an opportunity to lay down their arms, embrace peace and enjoy cash payment and job opportunities.

Despite the huge amount of money channeled through the NDDC and various other government intervention programmes, the state of environmental degradation in the region has remained appalling, the needs of the people in the area of social amenities and infrastructure has remained unmet, the level of poverty and unemployment in the region has also been on the high side (UNDP, 2006). For example, UNDP (2006) reported that water in the region still comes from unsafe sources with only about 20 percent to 24 percent of rural communities and about 50 percent of urban communities having access to safe drinking water. The situation is the same in the area of health where most of the communities do not have access to basic health care services (UNDP, 2006).

4. Conclusion

The discovery of oil in commercial quantity in the Niger Delta has led to increase in government revenue. However, this increase in government revenue has not translated to improved wellbeing for Nigerians especially the oil bearing communities. Worse still, oil exploration in the Niger Delta is not carried out in line with global best practice as high incidence of oil spillage and gas flaring have led to environmental degradation and undermined subsistence agriculture which is the main source of livelihood in the oil bearing communities. The failure of the Niger Delta communities to secure compensation for environmental degradation and fair share of revenue accruing from oil via peaceful protest has led to adoption of militancy as a strategy for pursuing same goals. MEND emerged as one of the major militant groups pursuing such goals. The escalation of militancy in the Niger Delta threatened sustained flow of oil revenue to the Nigerian government and IOCs. Hence some intervention programmes were put in place to appease the militants and oil bearing communities. However, these government intervention programmes and the huge sum spent through such programmes did not effectively address the deprivation of the Niger Delta people nor did it effectively address their grievances.

This study therefore contend, despite the adoption of militancy as a strategy by MEND and the intervention programmes put in place by the government, that the central of goals and objectives of MEND has not been achieved. Based on this, militancy and various forms of agitations are bound to continue in the Niger Delta region and will continue to disrupt oil exploration and security of the region.

5. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, we put forward the following recommendations:

- The IOCs must ensure that oil exploration is done in line with global best practice to reduce the incidence of oil spillage and gas flaring so as to mitigate environmental degradation. Where spillage occurs, there should be adequate compensation and clean up as specified by the extant regulations.
- The Nigerian government and IOCs must collaborate with major stakeholders in the oil bearing communities to evolve a long term development plan that will improve the state of infrastructure and social amenities in the Niger Delta region.
- The oil bearing communities must seek development plan that does not only emphasize allocating fund to Commissions but which specifies how to gainfully engage and support the local people to continue in their agricultural activities without being disrupted by environmental degradation resulting from oil exploration by IOCs.

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