

**OIL ENCLAVE ECONOMY AND SEXUAL LIAISONS  
IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA REGION**

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By

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the intersection of oil enclave economy and the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The particular focus of this thesis is on the extent to which oil enclavity contributes to the emergence of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers. Despite the fact that the Nigerian oil industry has been subjected to considerable scholarly debate for over five decades, this aspect of the social dimension of oil has not received adequate scholarly attention. Gender-specific discourse has tended to focus more on women protest. Other aspects, such as gender-specific violence that women in the region have had to live with, are either ignored or poorly articulated. Picketing of oil platforms by protesting women is celebrated as signs that women are active in the struggle against oil Transnational Companies (TNCs).

While women protest is a significant struggle against oil TNCs, it has the potential of blurring our intellectual focus on the specific challenges confronting women in the Niger Delta. This study shows that since the inauguration of the Willink Commission in 1957, national palliatives meant to alleviate poverty in the Niger Delta region have not been gender sensitive. A review of the 1957 Willink Commission and others that came after it shows that the Nigerian state is yet to address the peculiar problems that the oil industry has brought to the women folk in the region. The paradox is that while oil provides enormous wealth and means of patronage to the Nigerian state elite, the oil TNCs, and better paid expatriate oil workers, a large section of the local Oil Bearing Communities (OBCs), especially women and unemployed youth, are not only dispossessed but survive in an environment characterised by anxiety and misery.

With limited survival alternatives, youths resort to violent protest including oil thefts and bunkering. Local women are also immersed in this debacle because some of them resort to sexual liaisons with economically empowered expatriate oil workers as an alternative means of survival. This study therefore shifts the focus to women by exploring the extent to which sexual liaison reflects the contradictions in the enclave oil economy. The study employed an *enclave economy conceptual framework* to demonstrate that oil extractive activities compromise and distort the local economies of OBCs. This situation compels local women to seek for alternative means of survival by entering into sexual liaisons with more financially privileged expatriate oil workers.

The study reviewed relevant secondary documentary sources of data. Further, it employed primary data collection techniques which include in-depth interviews/life histories, ethnographic observations, focus group discussions, and visual sociology. Besides obtaining the social profile and challenges facing the women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers, the study provides an outline of participants' narratives on the different social and economic dimensions of the intersection of oil enclave economy and sexual liaisons. The study found that some of the women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers have been abandoned with 'fatherless' children. Some of them have also been rejected by their immediate family members and, in some cases, by their community. The study also found that the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and the incidents of abandoned 'fatherless' children that result from the practice, has over the years been played out through local resentment against oil TNCs and their expatriate employees. This finding helps to fill the gap in narratives and to make sense of the civic revolt and deepening instability in the Niger Delta region.

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## **DEDICATION**

To the ever-green loving Memory of my Father and Mother:

**Chief Simon Gandu Agang Yawuan**  
**Mrs. Zinariya Aboliyat Gandu**

Who despite all odds had the foresight to send me to school

And to my Wife and Children:

**Mrs Maryam Gandu**  
**Ms. Zinariya-Sarafina Gandu**  
**Mr. Yohanna Gandu (Jr.)**  
**Mr. Chris-Abba Gandu**  
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For their prayers, perseverance and enduring my long years of absence from home.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ABU	Ahmadu Bello University
AFRICOM	US Africa Command
CLO	Civil Liberties Organization
CEPEDS	Centre for Petroleum, Environment & Development Studies
CA	Community Assistance
CD	Community Development
CDPs	Community Development Projects
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
COFP	Crude Oil Finger Printing
COSEND	Consolidated Council on Social and Economic Development of the Coastal States of the Niger Delta
E&P	Exploration and Production
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EFCC	Corrupt Practices Commission and Other Related Offences Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EITI	Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GMOU	Global Memoranda of Understanding
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GON	Government of Nigeria
HDI	Human Development Indicator
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission (Nigeria)
JTF	Joint Task Force
LGA	Local Government Area
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni Peoples

NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa
NDDB	Niger Delta Development Board
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDPVF	Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NDVF	Niger Delta Volunteer Force
NEPD	National Energy Policy Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NPC	National Population Commission (Nigeria)
OMPADEC	Oil and Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission
OBCs	Oil Bearing Communities
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OFP	Oil Finger Printing
plc	Public Limited Company
RDS	Royal Dutch Shell
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SGF	Secretary to the Government of the Federation
SPDC	Shell Petroleum Development Company
SLO	Social Licence to Operate
SCD	Sustainable Community Development'
TNCs	Transnational Corporations
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNCSD	United Nations Commission for Social Development
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (or Dutch East India Company)
VPSHR	Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights
WB	World Bank
WHARC	Women's Health and Action Research Centre

# **PART I**

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **OIL ENCLAVE ECONOMY AND SEXUAL LIAISONS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

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#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

##### **1.1 CONTEXT OF RESEARCH**

...girls and young women who are looking for economic survival hang around the oil companies and keep themselves at the service of both the national and international oil workers who are believed to be 'guys in money'. These women are given few Naira or at most few dollars at the end of every sexual meeting. It is clear then that, the staff members of the oil multinationals...have cheap sex at their disposition. Worse still, most of these relationships end up with children and the women are left alone to carry the burden of bringing up these 'fatherless babies'.

(Ebere: 2009:5).

Studies on the distortions of subsistence economies and general disruption of women's livelihoods by mineral extractive enclave economies have not extended their theoretical discourses to the ontology of oil enclavity and sexual liaisons in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Yet, the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers is a major social dimension of oil extractive activities. Political conflicts, youth restlessness, militia violence and kidnapping of expatriate oil workers, has tended to receive considerable local and international scholarly attention (Adalikwu: 2007; Akpan: 2005; Anikpo: 1996; Asakitikpi and Oyelaran: 2000; Dadiowei: 2003; Ebeku: 2004; Frynas: 2000; Ikelegbe: 2005a, b; Laurie: 1999; Human Rights Watch: 1999; Iyayi: 2005; Obi: 1997b, 2006a, b, 2008 a, b; Omeje: 2004, 2006, 2008; Watts: 2001, 2006, 2008a, b, c, d; Zalik: 2004, 2008). This study seeks to shift scholarly debate away from the political dimensions to the socioeconomics. For instance, one of the social outcomes of oil and sexual liaisons is the phenomenon of 'fatherless children.' The concept of 'fatherless children' is used in this study to describe children or a child born out of sexual liaisons between local Niger Delta women and expatriate oil workers, but whose fathers do not accept paternity or their identity is unknown. Therefore,

'fatherless children' does not mean that such children do not have biological fathers but that the fathers are unidentified.

In response to this hiatus, this study interrogates the tendency of the oil mineral enclave economy of the Niger Delta to distort the local subsistence of Oil Bearing Communities (OBCs),<sup>1</sup> by a 'push and pull' of local women to engage in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers as an alternative survival strategy. Sexual liaison is not an abstract or immoral phenomenon as some studies may tend to suggest (Okonta: 2007; Omorodion: 2006). The study therefore rejects the usual puritan explanation that sexual liaison is immoral. This is because such a paradigm does not explain how the intricacies of oil enclave entity form the social and economic basis for the emergence and continuous existence of sexual liaison in the Niger Delta. Sexual liaison is a manifestation of the social and economic dynamics of oil mineral mining in the Niger Delta region and other enclave economies in Sub-Saharan African countries (Kitula: 2006:405, 408–412). Such economies are usually characterised by mismanagement of mineral wealth, destruction and distortion of environmental subsistence nests and occupational survival of indigenous population, and sharp income disparity between local population and expatriates who work in the mineral mining sector.

This study argues that the Nigerian Federal government palliatives, which began with the inauguration of the Willink Commission in 1957 (Willink: 1958) and continued to the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the community development efforts of oil Transnational Corporations (TNCs) pioneered by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), have both failed to deliver development to OBCs. It is now time to examine the extent to which sexual liaison represents a coping strategy adopted by local women. Given that oil enclivity and the phenomenon of sexual liaisons have direct multiple linkages, this study explores the ways in which mineral enclaves distort and dislocate subsistence economies and force local communities to adopt unconventional alternative means of survival. The study also explores how income differential dynamics (which inherently favour expatriate oil workers) explain the phenomenon of sexual liaisons.

The study does not claim that there is one single consensus on the social contribution of oil to the Nigerian economy and society. Opinions indeed differ. For instance, Hassan (et al.: 2002:1) argues that over fifty decades of crude oil production and exportation has brought out "both the best and the worst of modern civilisation in Nigeria". The general belief though is

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<sup>1</sup> Oil bearing communities is used in this study to connote indigenous Niger Delta rural communities residing where oil and gas extractive activities are located.

that the huge financial contributions of oil to the national economy have not had a positive impact on the poverty profile of Nigeria as a country and OBCs as a people. Being an enclave industry, oil mineral extractive activities in the Niger Delta do not only generate wealth, but also induce environmental pollution problems. These problems compromise and dislocate local subsistence economies and in turn force OBCs to seek alternative means of survival.

This study is not about the economic gains of oil, but the extent to which oil enclavity leads to socioeconomic and cultural dislocations in the Niger Delta. As Chevalier and Buckles (1995:1) observed, this study is not driven by a desire to give “a romantic account of native culture and history” that has been destroyed by oil. On the contrary, this study seeks to understand the intersection of oil and sexual liaisons. The study does this by interrogating the extent to which oil enclavity compromises subsistence. Although oil mineral extractive activities affect men and women, this study choose to interrogate the complex and peculiar ways in which oil enclavity impacts on women, because women are said to be the most victimised in the Niger Delta (Ekine: 2008:70–77). Hassan (et al.: 2002:1) also called attention to the fact that “the social and economic impact of oil extractive activities on women have been quite significant, although very little study has been carried out to ascertain the particulars of these impacts”.

Uyigue and Agho (2007:20) state that “many people in the Niger delta whose source of livelihood once depended on natural sectors such as farming and fishing had to change their means of livelihood”, because “they can no longer engage in farming and fishing”. Their study found that many are now traders, dealing with different kinds of goods. Some work in the civil service, and an insignificant few are employed by oil companies operating in the Niger Delta area. Many are also said to engage in multiple subsistence activities in order to increase their income. For example some in the civil service combine their civil service work with petty trading (Uyigue and Agho: 2007:20).

Other studies found that voluntary and non voluntary migration have become common coping strategies adopted, particularly by the men in OBCs (Feltenstein: 1992, Opukri and Ibaba: 2008:188–189). An earlier study by Okoko (1999:375) also observed that in the oil bearing community of Ibeno in Akwa Ibom state where Exxon-Mobil is dominant, a “high rate of male out-migration” became a common coping strategy. By their nature, mineral enclaves induce migration and exert diverse strains on rural subsistence economies (Kitula: 2006:410–411). Other effects include the phenomenon of ‘disappearing peasantry’ (Berry: 1987:202–222), general inflation and the higher costs of food, housing, health facilities,



education for children, transportation and other basic social services (Okoko: 1999:375–376, Duruigbo: 2004:132–134).

The immediate consequence of the destruction of traditional occupations of fishing and farming by oil extractive activities is unemployment. OBCs, which in the past thrived in an environmental friendly and sustainable economy (Aghalino: 2000; Richards 1987:85–109; Rotimi and Ogen: 2008; Usoro: 1974; Watts: 1987a, c; Watts: 1987b:58–84), “suddenly found themselves without gainful employment and thus unable to provide for the basic needs of their families” (Duruigbo: 2004:133). In a related study, Oyefusi (2008:540) laments that although the Niger Delta “accounts for over 90% of the nation’s oil revenue, and its gas reserves are now touted as the next great potential revenue-earner for the nation”, the region continues to bear “a disproportionate share of the cost of oil extraction” for which it has not been adequately compensated. Rather, its inhabitants have continued to “suffer a high share of government repression”. He also attests to the fact that unemployment and poverty levels are believed to be higher in the Niger Delta region than the national average, and “social services are abysmally low”.

In similar vein, Davis (2009:5) states that unemployment is a serious problem in the Niger Delta because “Nigeria’s oil industry employs only about 30,000 workers, satisfying virtually none of the local demands for jobs”. He recognises that general poverty and underdevelopment amongst OBCs “offers little alternative to livelihoods, especially for young men”. His study also attests to the steady drift of youth from rural areas to major ‘oil cities’ such as Port Harcourt in search of jobs that cannot be found. Increasing numbers of these youth are therefore faced with poverty rather than the expected prosperity promised in the city. Davis notes that the coping strategies commonly adopted by young men include illicit drug use, illegal activities of street gangs and cult groups.

According to Mortished (1996) cited in Ebere (2009:5), about half the population of the Niger Delta is under 20 year of age. Young men and women turn to the oil industry for jobs but suddenly discover that they cannot find any for lack of skills. Those lucky enough to possess the prerequisite skills have not always been successful in securing the well-paying oil industry jobs, because “oil is an enclave industry” which “only employs a few people with highly specialized skills” (Duruigbo: 2004:133). Those most likely to possess the requisite skills also come from outside OBCs. The dynamics of the problem are such that available unskilled or odd jobs in the oil industry, such as security work, are male oriented but are more likely to engage a few men and not all men in the Niger Delta. The foregoing must have

informed Omorodion's (2004:1) lamentation that "oil companies provide the male population with alternative employment.

With the exception of Okoko (1999), one commonality of the foregoing studies is that they adopted a generic approach in analysis of the socioeconomic impact of oil and coping strategies adopted by OBCs. Such analysis treats the Niger Delta as one monolithic unit with little regard to social class, gender and other social considerations. Such an approach provides little or no analytical space for the interrogation of the peculiar ways in which oil affects specific individuals and groups, especially women, and the coping or survival strategies that are commonly adopted by women. Oil TNCs have also played a part in the perception of the Niger Delta as a monolithic unit. Ibeanu (2000:29) complains thus: "the point is that to assume, as oil companies presently do, that their host communities are internally monolithic is wrong. Differences of class, gender, and generation should be addressed if productive community relations and conflict resolution systems are to be developed in the Niger Delta". It is this salient gap that this study seeks to fill.

If we are to understand the unique ways in which oil extractive activities affect women as a gender category, then the need to broaden the exploration of the social dimension of oil has become increasingly necessary. Gender has always played a significant role in both the way OBCs adjust to the socioeconomic impact of oil and the ways oil TNCs have tried to 'buy peace' and Social Licence (SL) to run their operations in the Niger Delta (WAC Global Services: 2003). For instance, the long practice by oil TNCs of making cash payments to traditional leaders or community elders benefits men not women, because traditional institutions are predominantly male. Ifeka (2006:722) also attests to this by stating that "restive' youth are recruited for menial low paid casual work in and outside oil terminals, or paid 'sitting allowances' to keep them at bay". Similarly, the phenomenon of oil theft and illegal bunkering or "spoils of oil insurgency" (International Crisis Group: 2006b:8-10) are forms of survival strategies orchestrated mostly by men, not women. The International Crisis Group (2006b:11) also reports occasions in which young men in the town of Olibiri spend their time trying to kidnap expatriate oil workers to force Shell to pay compensation.

The adaptation strategies of indigenous communities to environmental challenges have become an integral part of the climate change debate (Uyigüe and Agho: 2007:19). It has also been recognised that resilience to climate change, which is a function of the coping strategies of indigenous societies and cultures (Adger: et al.: 2003; Mitchell and Tanner: 2006:1-12), is an important tool that needs to be studied. Therefore, if the goal of community development projects in the Niger Delta is about increasing the resilience of OBCs to cope with the impact

of oil, it should interest those who want to find solutions to the Niger Delta debacle to understand the coping mechanism adopted by local communities and particularly women. Such an understanding will impact positively on the way Community Development Projects (CDPs) are designed and implemented successfully.

Although the enclave nature of oil mineral exploration affects men and women, their responses to the social and economic effects of oil extractive activities are not the same. Therefore an understanding of men's and women's material realities and the different survival alternatives that each gender category adopts to survive is important. This gap requires that scholarly action begins to integrate gender in the articulation and understanding of coping strategies in OBCs. This partly explains why the focus of this study is on voluntary sexual liaison between local women and expatriate oil workers as one of the coping strategies adopted by women in the Niger Delta.

The study therefore examines the socioeconomic context in which the phenomenon of sexual liaisons arises. Both local women and expatriate oil workers in the Niger Delta region are driven into sexual liaisons by certain individual needs and the desire to meet or satisfy those needs. For the expatriate oil workers the needs are sexual satisfaction. But for local women, the needs are beyond mere sexual satisfaction and may differ from woman to woman. Therefore, sexual liaison is understood in this study to mean sex/sexual favors, services and/or obligations provided by local women to expatriate oil workers in exchange for marital vows, material benefits, financial support, the promise or the possibility of immigrating to a more comfortable life in Europe, North America, Asia or any other country or region, generally regarded as 'abroad'. The concept of sexual liaisons therefore is multifaceted and denotes a variety of things depending on the individual local woman and expatriate oil workers involved, the nature of sexual services expected by the expatriate oil worker(s) to be provided by the woman and reward(s) to be derived by the woman or women involved in the practice.

Urban centres in Nigeria are sites of sexual liaisons, as any site of human interaction, but especially so because of the weakening of normative codes of social interaction that are prevalent in rural areas. Preliminary studies, commentaries, and the findings in this study suggest a heightened scale of such liaisons in key oil cities of the Niger Delta area of Nigeria compared to other regions of the country (Anikpo 1996: 23, Asakitikpi and Oyelaran: 2000: 180; Izugbara: 2005; Naanen: 1991; Omorodion: 1993; Smith: 2007). Sexual liaisons of local women in the Niger Delta as understood in this study are not about sex-for-money liaisons, as a generic phenomenon, but are the result of the impact of hugely divergent financial resource

endowments between expatriate/non-local workers on the one hand, and female members of host communities on the other hand, and are a social phenomenon widely found where such disparities exist in command over income, such as in the platinum mining communities of South Africa (Capel: 2006: 9).

In the course of field work, participants referred to sexual liaisons as '*ashawo work*' which in commonsense Nigerian parlance would mean commercial sex work. But that is not the literal meaning it connotes in this study. Rather, '*ashawo work*' is used in this study to refer to any form of sexual services provided by local women in the course of their sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. Hence the relationship itself is not a conventional practice of prostitution in which sex is directly provided in exchange for monetary reward, the use of '*ashawo work*' is merely a short hand or generic phrase employed by research participants to describe the act of sexual liaison.

The study explores the extent to which sexual liaison is a fallout from the social and economic impact of oil extractive activities. The thrust of this study holds that the phenomenon of sexual liaisons is immersed in the social and economic dynamics of oil enclavity in the Niger Delta, which explains why the debate over oil wealth and poverty in the Niger Delta is very important to this study. By its focus on oil enclavity and sexual liaisons, the study takes the investigation beyond the normal generic approach to the social impact of oil in its effects on the entirety of the Niger Delta. The focus here seeks to address actual individual-level survival circumstances such as low income level and low educational attainment that push and pull women into sexual liaisons. In a related development, a pilot study by Anyasi (et al.: 2006:1) came to the conclusion:

...sex patronage by oil workers is found to be attractive and money in the hands of the oil workers remains a strong bargaining instrument. The belief by women that a child produced from a liaison with white men usually guarantees settlement in the form of relocation to the urban centres and cash rewards should be addressed.

Udoh (2009:570–572) also found that poverty and the migratory nature of foreign expatriate oil workers, who do not always move with their wives, are all factors contributing to the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. The debate over the huge oil revenue that has accrued to the Nigerian economy will therefore make scholarly sense when counter balanced with the poverty profile in the Niger Delta. This forms the context within which we can better understand the social and economic intricacies of phenomenon of sexual liaisons as survival strategies adopted by local women in the region.

There have also been special agencies and palliatives put in place by successive Federal Governments of Nigeria (GoN) to alleviate poverty and marginalisation of OBCs (Higgins: 2009:4). Since the inauguration of the Willink Commission in 1957 (Willink: 1958), the Niger Delta has therefore continued to be recognised as a region that requires special attention to development (Osuoka: 2007:5). It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of these palliatives and the extent to which they have contributed, or failed to contribute to poverty reduction in the Niger Delta. What is certain is that the Nigerian state has made genuine attempts to address the unique human developmental challenges in the Niger Delta and to alleviate poverty for its inhabitants. Poverty reduction progress has however been extremely slow to come. This is particularly worrisome given the substantial resources that have been invested. Oil resource endowments have not translated into welfare gains for OBCs. Failure of palliatives to bring development to the region has partly been blamed on over reliance on weak and corrupt government institutions (Ebeku: 2008:399).

The focus of this study is not on state palliatives but the social impact of oil on women in general and the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in particular. I am also aware that these palliatives were not specifically conceived, designed and implemented to alleviate the social and economic circumstances of women in the Niger Delta. However, a review of the success and or failure of state interventions or palliatives would enable this study uncover why and how both men and women in the Niger Delta have had to evolve specific coping mechanisms. Such a review will also provide an analytical spectrum on which to understand individualised initiatives put in place to survive and overcome the socioeconomic challenges wrought on local subsistence by oil extractive activities.

Similarly, this study interrogates attempts by oil TNCs to address community development in the Niger Delta. But again, to what extent have Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) community development projects alleviated poverty in OBCs? If such projects have succeeded, why then are local women adopting sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers as a coping strategy? Shell operates Nigeria's largest joint partnership venture which account for approximately 40% of the country's oil from over 1,000 onshore wells (see Figure 1.1) in the Niger Delta (Shell 2006: 3, 2007: 5). In 2007 alone, Shell paid \$1.6 billion (Shell share) to the Nigerian government in taxes and royalties from Shell-run operations (Shell: 2007: 4).

SPDC operates a joint venture in which the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) holds 55%, Shell 30%, Elf 10% and Agip 5% (Ite: 2007a, 2007b:3). Each of the partners funds the operations in proportion to their shareholding (Shell: 2006:33, 2007:25).

Shell's operations are 95% onshore in the Niger Delta and adjoining shallow offshore areas (Figure 1.1), where it operates in an oil mining lease area of around 31000 square kilometres. The company has more than 6000 kilometres of pipelines and flow lines, 87 flow stations, eight gas plants and more than 1000 producing wells. Shell employs more than 10000 people, of whom 4000 are full time staff. Shell is therefore a corporate citizen within the context of Nigerian oil industry (Ite: 2007b:3, SPDC: 2004a:3)



**Figure 1.1** Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) oil operations in the Niger Delta

Source: Adapted from SPDC (2004a), page 3.

Besides the fact that most of SPDC's oil exploration activities are onshore (Figure 1.1), being the largest oil and gas TNC in Nigeria makes Shell a target for restive youths and militant groups. This also informs why Shell is also the biggest spender on community development in the Niger Delta. In her *"Responsible Energy: The Shell Sustainability Report 2007"*, Shell claimed to have contributed more than \$110 million in 2007 to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Shell also provided \$68 million in the same year to her own community development programmes in the Niger Delta. Contracts worth nearly 1 billion dollars were awarded to Nigerian servicing companies by Shell in the same year (Shell: 2007:24). In Chapter Five we review Shell's community development agenda in the Niger Delta.

The debate over the success or failure of oil TNCs' community development efforts in the Niger Delta has often been polemical. One variance in this polemic debate is that

corporate social responsibility cannot replace effective governance in the Niger Delta. This is because oil TNCs do not have a say on how revenue from oil resources is distributed among Nigerian citizens. Other problems have had to do with the lack of acceptance or ownership of SPDC's community projects. Besides the lamentations that oil TNCs do not keep commitments, including those in memorandums of understanding signed with communities; there have been allegations that projects have been started without broad community consultation or coordination. Community members have even referred to development projects undertaken by oil companies as "Shell's borehole" or "Mobil's hospitals" (International Crisis Group: 2006c:14).

It has also been alleged that, once production priorities have been met and the threat of imminent protest from local communities has subsided, promised development is "delayed for reasons communities consider excuses" (International Crisis Group: 2006c:14). There is also the contention that SPDC's approaches to community development "encouraged unsustainable development and a culture of dependency" (Ite: 2007b:1).

It has equally been alleged that instead of empowering women, SPDC uses community development projects to mobilise women as Peace Corps and use them as peace canons (Ikelegbe: 2005a:242). One such women Peace Corps conference was held in 2002 in the Niger Delta (SPDC: 2002:22). The relevance of this debate to the study is that chapter five provides statistical evidence to show that SPDC and other oil TNCs have failed to genuinely invest in and alleviate poverty for local women. Rather, oil TNCs have always been interested in using Niger Delta women to facilitate the resolution of the crisis, but are not necessarily committed to address the fundamental material conditions confronting these women. As a major player in the Nigerian oil sector, SPDC has ignored and refused to deal with the specific ways in which the oil affects women in the Niger Delta.

The enclave economy hypothesis and sexual liaisons are the pre-occupation of chapter two. This chapter provides the context that gives us glimpses and insight into the poverty profile of the Niger Delta region. It prepares the ground for us to appreciate the peculiar ways in which oil affects OBCs in general and why women adopt sexual liaison with expatriate oil workers as a coping strategy.

## **1.2 OIL WEALTH-POVERTY DEBATE IN THE NIGER DELTA**

To provide the context that will give us insights into the social impact of crude oil production on OBCs, this section undertakes a brief review of the contribution of oil to the Nigerian economy (see Figure 1.2). Phia (2006, 2009:249–250) holds that oil exploration

activities in Nigeria date back to at least 1903. Others (Jones: 1981:63, 116, Njeze: 1978:165–166) states that active exploration began between 1907 and 1908. Large-scale commercial prospecting, extraction, production and exportation, however, began in 1957. By the 1970s, Nigerian oil industry became the main revenue generating source. Percentage of crude oil in Nigeria's total exports which was 2.7 percent in 1960 jumped to 96.1 percent in 1980 and rose to 98.2 percent in 1996. Similarly, estimated crude oil revenue accruing to Nigeria that was N2.4 million (Naira) in 1960, rose to N12,354 million (Naira) in 1980. By 2000, it stood at N1,340,000 million (Naira). It got to a high of N6,700,000 million (Naira) in 2007. The total estimate of crude oil revenue that accrued to the Nigerian economy from 1958 to 2006 has been put at about N29.8 trillion (Naira)<sup>2</sup>.

Prior to the discovery of her crude oil potential, Nigeria depended very heavily on the production and exports of agricultural products, mainly palm produce, cocoa, cotton, groundnuts, and hides and skin, as well as coal and tin mining (see Table 1.1). The transition from agrarian to an oil enclave economy came at a time Nigeria was transforming from autonomous regions into increased centralisation of administration and decision-making. This process was reinforced, first by civil war and later by long years of military rule that resulted in the federal government “assuming a position of unprecedented and disproportionate pre-eminence” (International IDEA: 2001:156).

With massive oil revenues accruing, the centralisation of power and its control at the federal level, meant that the Nigerian state was “conferred enormous powers of patronage and influence, with consequences for the intensity of the struggle for access to, and control of the state” (International IDEA: 2001:156). The unfolding social and economic effects are part of the focus which this study seeks to interrogate.

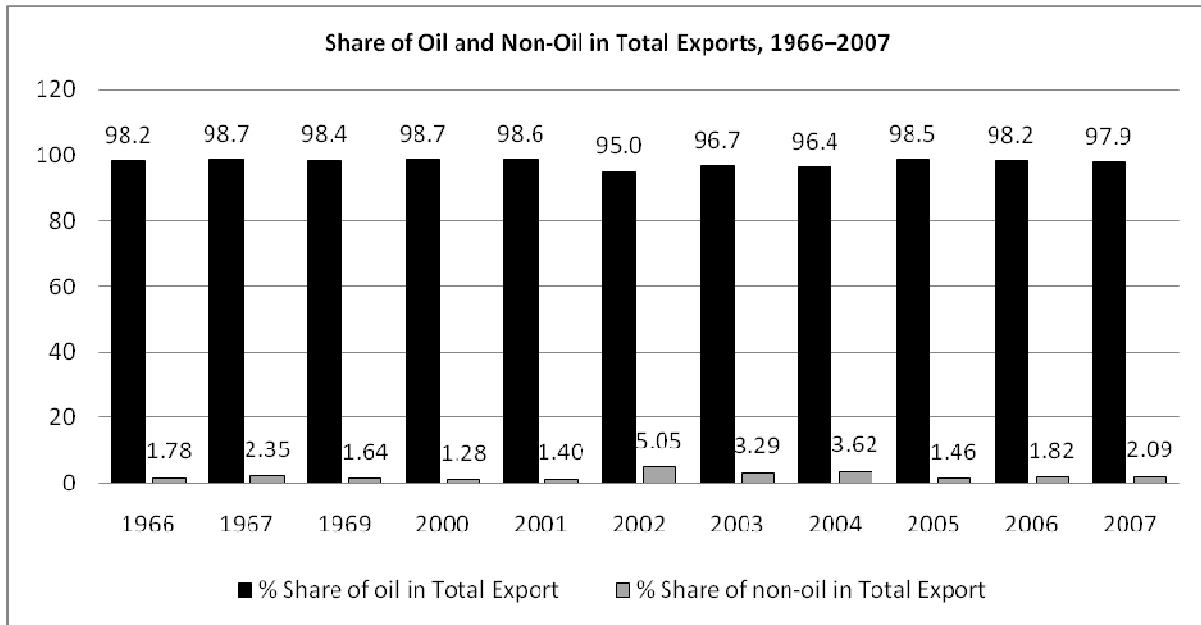
Oil revenue contributed an estimated N3.63 trillion or 80% to total government national budget in 2008. Non-oil sectors which include manufacturing, agriculture and solid minerals contributed N910 billion or 20 % (Alabi: 2008:63). These figures reflect the pre-2007 levels (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA): 2005:55–80). Oil and gas reserves in the Niger Delta region have been estimated at 25 billion barrels and 130 billion cubic feet respectively. With 5284 oil wells, 10 gas plants, 275 flow stations and 10 export terminals, crude oil production stood at 2.45 million barrels per day in 2007 (Aigbokhan: et al: 2007, cited in Alabi: 2008: 63). It is therefore no surprise that Nigeria's budgetary and developmental

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<sup>2</sup>See: “50 years of Oil in Nigeria”, in *Tell: Nigeria's Independent Weekly*, Special Edition, February 18, 2008, pp. 28 and 35; oil and Development



programs have been predicated on the gas and oil industry (Ibeanu: 2002a:164, USAID: 2006:2).



**Figure 1.2** Share of oil and non-oil in total exports, 1966–2007

Source: Adapted from UNDP (2009), page 37.

**Table 1.1**

Nigeria's exports (in thousand tons): 1919–1960

Article of trade	1919	1929–1931	1933–1937	1951	1960
Palm oil	80	129	150	150	183
Palm Kernels	192	255	326	347	418
Ground-nuts	45	151	242	141	333
Cocoa*	20	53	91	122	154
Crude Oil					847
Tin ore			15	12	10
Columbite			1	2	2

\*Cocoa exports are calculated in thousand pounds sterling.

Source: Adapted from Frynas (2000), page 10.

Nigeria's oil and gas reserves are found in the relatively simple geological structures along the Niger Delta coastal region (see Figure 1.3). This makes the region highly

susceptible to both on-shore and marine pollution through oil spillage and blowouts, especially in the exploration and production (E&P) stages. This combines with continuous flaring of associated gas (Nnadozie: 2001) to compromise subsistence economies.



**Figure 1.3** Oil infrastructure in the Niger Delta

Source: Adapted from Watts (2008d), page 34.

The economic benefits of crude oil exploration and production in Niger Delta have indeed been so overwhelming that, until quite recently, the adverse ecological devastation and environmental deterioration and consequent social impact on OBCs are sometimes ignored. The Nigerian economy has been described as “the most oil-dependent” (Alabi: 2008:63) in the world. Yet, “the inhabitants of the Niger Delta remain among the most deprived oil communities in the world – 70 per cent live on less than US\$1 a day, the standard economic measure of absolute poverty” (Amnesty International: 2005:3). Higgins (2009:4) also submits that the Niger Delta human development index, which is 0.564 and slightly higher than the Nigerian HDI of 0.448, is still rated far below other regions or countries with similar gas or oil reserves in the world, such as Venezuela’s 0.772 and Indonesia’s 0.697. Amnesty further laments:

Niger Delta communities see little of Nigeria’s oil revenues. Vast stretches of the region have erratic electricity supplies, poor water quality, a few functioning schools, health care centres, post offices... The only visible government presence in many parts [of the region] is a heavily-armed security apparatus [to protect oil installations]. The government provides very little infrastructure, public works or conditions conducive to employment.

(Amnesty International: 2005:2–3)

As opinions on the contribution of oil continue to differ, so also has the Niger Delta become a contested terrain. The sociopolitical dimensions of the problem, as noted earlier, have continued to receive considerable scholarly attention (Adalikwu: 2007; Akpan: 2005; Anikpo: 1996; Asakitikpi and Oyelaran: 2000; Dadiowei: 2003; Ebeku: 2004; Frynas: 2000; Ikelegbe: 2005a, b; Iyayi: 2005; Laurie: 1999; Watts: 2008a, b, c, d). A great many studies on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria by Obi (1997b, 2006a, b, 2008a, b), Orogun (2009: 460–462) and many others (Ikelegbe: 2005a, b, Ibeanu: 2000, International Crisis Group: 2006b), have focused on the generalised restiveness, communal, ethnic, civil, environmental rights, resource agitation and conflicts in the region.

For instance, Obi (2006b:95–97) and Watts (2007, 2008a, b, c, d) argue that perceived neglect of the region by the Nigerian state on one hand and sustained environmental degradation as a result of the oil extractive activities continue to generate more militant protests and threat of outright rebellion against the state. Ojakorotu (2009:2) laments the rate at which “the crisis has taken a new turn with increasing violence”, seemingly “spiralling out of control”. Orogun (2009:4) blamed the contestations on the “legalities of resource control, internecine squabbles over revenue allocation formulas and derivation principles”, because it contributes to “incessant disruptions of crude oil pipelines” and “revenues derived from the global economy”. Yet others (Olukoshi: et al.: 1995, Frynas: 1999, 2000) blamed deep inequitable distribution of oil wealth as the structure generating unrests and violence in the region. Orogun (2009:463) also contends that the hegemonic presence of oil TNCs also exacerbates and polarises “the resource-revenue control conflict beyond the ethno-geographical concentration of the ostensibly domestic political schism” and is fast transforming it “into a regional and international energy security predicament”.

Adalikwu (2007) sums-up the political dimension of the problem as simply a “triangular conflict” involving the Nigerian state, oil multinational corporations and oil bearing communities, respectively. She submits that decades of oil exploitation of crude oil without “accountability by oil TNCs”, and collusion by oil TNCs “with repressive military dictatorships in exploiting Nigeria’s oil wealth for the benefit of corrupt elite... failed to protect the environment, respect human rights” and address the socioeconomic challenges posed to oil bearing communities (Adalikwu: 2007:15–16).

Saro-Wiwa (1996, 1999) warned earlier that it is these local communities that have been greatly affected by the unregulated activities of oil exploration and extraction. The

problem has been simplified as the paradox of “want in the midst of plenty” (International Crisis Group: 2006a:19–22) or “paradox of plenty” (Orogun: 2009:259). This paradox contributes to increased youth restiveness, armed militancy and counter official violence by the Nigerian state (Douglas, et al: 2003: 2–6, 2004; International Crisis Group: 2006b:2–7; Okonta: 2006; Ukeje: 2001:339–358; Watts: 2008a:50–74). As the vicious cycle of violence runs its course, youth mobilise to resist (Akpan: 2005; Ikelegbe: 2005a, b; Obi: 2006b:95–98; Watts: 1987a, b). Others sabotage oil flow production as a way of pressing home their demands for better education, employment and social infrastructure in the region.

While the foregoing studies provide very useful information on the social and economic conundrum of the Niger Delta, little has been done to articulate the unique social circumstances of women in the Niger Delta area. Anikpo (1996:11) argues that oil extraction constitutes “vigorous economic activities which are capable of corroding pre-existing class cleavages; creating a nouveau riche, and entrenching new values which reflect the interests of the new economically dominant group in the community”. Therefore, the dislocation of subsistence economies of OBCs by oil induced environmental degradation greatly diminished the capacity of local indigenous communities to pursue their livelihoods in a normal way that they hitherto used to do. Given that oil mineral extractive activities affect both men and women in the Niger Delta, it is therefore very important for to preliminarily interrogate the challenge of poverty in order to later understand the social context of the survival strategies adopted by OBCs. This will also provide the basis for the interrogation of the peculiar social and economic circumstances that make women adopt sexual liaison as a coping strategy.

Naanen (1995:21) argues that oil has engendered the collapse of the local economies of oil bearing communities and led to economic distress. Enyia (1991:183) points to the fact that farming, which used to be the mainstay of Oloibiri where the first oil well was drilled, is now “a shadow of its former self” because “the community’s economy has been paralysed, as farmlands have been destroyed, fishing activities grounded and aquatic life virtually castrated by many years of oil prospection and exploration”. The consequences are that people are forced to give up their traditional occupation due to the destruction of land, rivers and fishes that are sources of subsistence in rural Niger Delta. Some of these studies might have been carried out several years ago, but their graphic presentation illustrates the situation in OBCs as it also “captures today’s reality” (Opukri and Ibaba: 2008:188).

Given that oil in the enclave entity has contributed to loss of subsistence occupations, displacements and loss of means of livelihood, it implies that people have been alienated from their means of production without the provision of any significant or viable alternative

means of survival for oil bearing communities. The situation is better appreciated if placed vis-à-vis the failure of Nigerian government palliatives to alleviate poverty in the Niger Delta since the inauguration of the Willink Commission in 1957. Similarly, efforts by Shell to engineer community development in oil bearing communities began in 1960 but are yet to succeed. These issues are discussed in relative detail in chapter five. The questions that need to be answered here are thus: How are OBCs surviving? How do they cope with the displacement and loss of means of livelihood?

Opukri and Ibaba (2008) have attempted to provide answers. The central argument in their study is that the polluting effects of oil extractive activities in the Niger Delta have “necessitated migration or relocation, either voluntary or involuntary” (Opukri and Ibaba: 2008:189). Their study found that coping mechanisms adopted by people range from forced to voluntary migration in search of ‘greener pastures’, because in some cases, there are no alternative means of livelihood. Migration whether voluntary or involuntary means that other peoples’ hitherto means of production in oil bearing communities have been affected in a negative way. Opukri and Ibaba (2008:188) state that migration as a coping strategy “takes two dimensions – rural-urban migration and rural-rural migration. Those who move to the urban area become proletariats, and seek to be employed in the public or private sectors of the economy”. They also argue that the problem is that those who migrate “do not find jobs, either because jobs are not available or they are not employable due to low level of education or lack of skills”. Consequently, “many end up doing menial jobs, and largely settle in the slumps”. Another dimension of the problem faced by rural-urban migrants is that they “are not recognized as displaced persons, probably because they do not live in camps”.

On the coping challenges of those who migrate from one rural community to another, Opukri and Ibaba’s (2008:188–189) study found that in most of the cases, fishermen who migrate in search of productive fishing grounds tend to create settlements in their host communities and are clearly seen as aliens, although some do integrate with host families or communities. Opukri and Ibaba brought in a new dimension to the debate on coping strategies of oil bearing communities by stating that “even those who remain in their communities are internally displaced”. Their argument is that even if people do not migrate, the loss of subsistence occupational and other forms of social and economic disturbances resulting from oil extractive activities constitute elements of internal displacement. They also argue that “due to occupational disorientation, people live in their own communities, as if they are aliens” (Opukri and Ibaba: 2008:189). Clark (et al.: 1999:9) acknowledges the heart of the problem:

Having lost their traditional subsistence lifestyle to pollution and other drastic changes in their immediate environment, many oil producing communities are now forced to buy their food... In Eket, Akwa Ibom State, where Mobil's operations have reportedly led to the loss of fish populations along the coast, fishing is available only to those who can afford large boat engines and trawlers to venture into the high seas. The rest of the population must buy "ice fish" (frozen fish)... a practice totally unknown a few years back.

Unlike other regions of Nigeria, the situation in the Niger Delta is compounded by the influx of expatriate oil workers into the region and their comparatively higher income. Hassan (et al.: 2002) addressed the fact that the presence of oil workers contributes to skyrocketing of prices of basic services beyond the reach of the indigenous population whose source of living is largely subsistence. It must however be pointed that it is difficult to find reliable demographic data on the scale of poverty in the Niger Delta region. What is available seems to be scattered information.

The first attempt at providing an idea on poverty in the region came from the colonial era in the form of the 1957 Willink Commission, which perceived the Niger Delta to be below the national average in terms of income and economic means (Willink: 1958). A World Bank (1995:2) study states that GNP in the Niger Delta was below the national average of \$280. The UNDP (2009:40) Human Development Report on Nigeria (see Tables 1.2 and 1.3) shows that the South-South political zone, which encompasses states from the Niger Delta, has both the highest Human Development Statistics as well as per capita income.

Other researches conducted by International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance ) (2001:157) and Alabi's (2008:64) computation from the 2005 and 2006 of Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, all submit that poverty and unemployment are relatively higher in the Niger Delta region than in other regions of Nigeria. International IDEA (2001:157) found that the average population per doctor in the Niger Delta region (or South-South) stood at 132,601 against the North West: 88,523; North East: 44,546; South West: 5,898; South East: 6,380; North Central: 9,048; and the national average: 39,455. Alabi's (2008:64) study particularly states that "the poverty level, unemployment, cost of health, cost of education, inaccessibility to social infrastructure are higher in Niger Delta" compared to the national average. He also states that about 31% of the people in the Niger Delta region were considered to be very poor compared with 24% which was the national average.

**Table 1.2**

Population, GDP and per capita income by zones in Nigeria

States	Population	GDP in Million Naira	GDP per capita in Naira	GDP per capita in US \$
<b>South East</b>				
Abia	3,051,841	156,581.86	51,307.34	407.75
Anambra	4,459,236	91,536.69	20,527.44	163.14
Ebonyi	2,317,922	57,656.38	24,874.17	197.68
Enugu	3,388,168	131,168.00	38,713.55	307.67
Imo	3,963,039	205,609.17	51,881.69	412.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,180,206.00</b>	<b>642,552.10</b>	<b>37,400.72</b>	<b>297.20</b>
<b>South West</b>				
Ekiti	2,449,007	97,551.83	39,833.22	316.56
Lagos	9,131,112	2,935,593.30	321,493.52	2,544.98
Ogun	3,721,345	115,791.01	31,115.37	247.28
Ondo	3,587,265	762,093.19	212,444.07	1,688.34
Osun	3,441,186	79,271.30	23,036.04	183.07
Oyo	5,505,815	194,182.18	35,268.56	280.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,386,723.00</b>	<b>4,184,482.81</b>	<b>164,829.58</b>	<b>1,309.94</b>
<b>South South</b>				
Akwa Ibom	3,841,712	1,843,218.56	479,790.93	3,813.01
Bayelsa	1,788,957	1,212,867.01	677,974.38	5,388.02
Cross River	3,048,375	321,901.19	76,073.71	604.58
Delta	4,130,761	1,208,594.31	292,583.94	2,235.23
Edo	3,463,629	142,784.30	41,223.90	327.62
Rivers	5,084,192	3,333,507.68	655,661.25	5,210.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,515,914.00</b>	<b>7,972,873.05</b>	<b>455,178.82</b>	<b>3,617.41</b>
<b>North Central</b>				
Benue	4,390,184	792,405.51	180,494.83	1,434.43
Kogi	3,424,637	63,348.75	18,497.95	147.01
Kwara	2,469,200	99,490.24	40,292.50	320.21
Nasarawa	1,926,153	297,301.17	154,349.72	1,226.65
Niger	3,862,030	820,194.99	212,374.06	1,687.57
Plateau	3,356,070	82,165.65	24,482.70	194.57
FCT Abuja	592,886	761,583.40	1,284,535.97	10,208.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,206,399.00</b>	<b>2,916,489.71</b>	<b>238,932.39</b>	<b>1,898.85</b>
<b>North East</b>				
Adamawa	3,352,085	88,296.94	26,340.90	209.34
Bauchi	4,563,897	95,798.53	20,990.51	166.82
Borno	4,044,366	269,473.62	66,629.39	529.52
Gombe	2,374,698	105,286.06	44,336.61	352.35
Taraba	2,411,441	43,020.00	17,839.95	141.78
Yobe	2,232,186	73,308.50	32,841.58	261.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,626,588.00</b>	<b>675,183.65</b>	<b>43,207.36</b>	<b>343.38</b>
<b>North West</b>				
Jigawa	4,585,695	574,713.28	125,327.41	996.01
Kaduna	6,276,729	558,386.58	88,961.40	707.00
Kano	9,266,314	797,251.26	86,037.58	683.76
Katsina	5,984,866	748,767.07	125,110.08	994.28
Kebbi	3,298,579	211,057.04	63,984.23	508.50
Sokoto	3,822,365	716,514.16	187,358.92	1,488.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,234,548.00</b>	<b>3,606,689.39</b>	<b>108,522.29</b>	<b>862.45</b>

Source: Adapted from UNDP (2009), page 98

**Table 1.3**

Human development statistics by states in Nigeria

S/No.	States	Human Development Index (HDI) Value	Human Poverty Index	Gender Development Measure	Gender Empowerment Measure	Inequality Measure
1	Abia	0.516	21.90	0.527	0.383	0.30
2	Adamawa	0.372	42.40	0.287	0.285	0.33
3	Akwa Ibom	0.616	27.10	0.622	0.310	0.34
4	Anambra	0.427	22.80	0.437	0.414	0.40
5	Bauchi	0.291	48.80	0.070	0.129	0.40
6	Bayelsa	0.593	32.50	0.600	0.219	0.40
7	Benue	0.532	36.00	0.508	0.204	0.40
8	Borno	0.345	55.90	0.250	0.033	0.40
9	Cross River	0.539	31.90	0.544	0.148	0.40
10	Delta	0.592	23.60	0.591	0.316	0.40
11	Ebonyi	0.401	34.30	0.398	0.284	0.40
12	Edo	0.465	21.70	0.475	0.148	0.40
13	Ekiti	0.523	22.10	0.519	0.380	0.40
14	Enugu	0.502	28.60	0.494	0.192	0.40
15	Gombe	0.353	45.00	0.076	0.057	0.40
16	Imo	0.510	22.70	0.418	0.303	0.40
17	Jigawa	0.362	48.40	0.303	0.055	0.40
18	Kaduna	0.448	34.30	0.422	0.213	0.40
19	Kano	0.436	43.00	0.333	0.092	0.40
20	Katsina	0.410	49.90	0.383	0.129	0.44
21	Kebbi	0.377	50.20	0.383	0.175	0.46
22	Kogi	0.411	34.40	0.359	0.069	0.46
23	Kwara	0.429	33.30	0.470	0.482	0.47
24	Lagos	0.607	14.50	0.548	0.357	0.48
25	Nasarawa	0.488	38.50	0.465	0.236	0.48
26	Niger	0.463	42.80	0.474	0.244	0.48
27	Ogun	0.465	24.50	0.466	0.247	0.50
28	Ondo	0.592	23.90	0.586	0.181	0.50
29	Osun	0.475	22.10	0.475	0.234	0.50
30	Oyo	0.478	21.90	0.447	0.311	0.50
31	Plateau	0.392	36.50	0.393	0.415	0.50
32	Rivers	0.633	22.80	0.616	0.367	0.50
33	Sokoto	0.475	40.50	0.385	0.099	0.50
34	Taraba	0.351	43.40	0.651	0.032	0.50
35	Yobe	0.278	58.00	0.166	0.172	0.50
36	Zamfara	0.434	42.60	0.422	0.056	0.51
37	FCT Abuja	0.717	21.00	0.680	0.062	0.64

Source: Adapted from UNDP (2009), page 92

Although tables 1.2 and 1.3 present us with vital data, they do not tell us much about the real living conditions and survival challenges of ordinary people in OBCs. Given that poverty or income disparity is likely to play a central role in the decision by local women to adopt sexual liaisons as a coping strategy, socially these statistics will have more meaning if placed vis-à-vis a working definition of poverty. But again, there is no agreement as to what constitutes poverty. Several attempts have been made to define poverty. Yet, there is no single definition of poverty. Poverty has meant different things to different people.



Within the context of the Niger Delta; poverty would commonly be perceived as a situation in which a person or group of persons do not have enough to eat, do not have adequate shelter, access to education and health services or protection from violence. Poverty has been defined by multilateral organizations as “hunger or being sick and not being able to see a doctor”. Poverty is also seen as “not having access to school and not knowing how to read”, not having a job, fear for the future, living one day at a time, losing a child to illness due to unclean water. Multilateral organizations also see poverty in terms of “powerlessness, lack of representation in decision making in the society and lack of freedom to express oneself” (UNDP: 2006:36).

Two broad non textbook definitions of poverty have also emerged from Nigeria. The first defined poverty or a poor person as “one who cannot pay school fees for his children; cannot meet any needs, including food; has no farm land and cannot farm well; cannot take part in age-grade activities (responsibilities that are specifically designated to some age groups in communities); cannot afford to send his children to school; wears tattered clothes; is very lean; and has no house to live in” (UNDP: 2006:36). In short, a poor person is perceived as one who has nothing and in some case has no voice in his/her community. The second definition from Nigeria states thus: “when you wake up hopeless as to where the next meal is coming from... when you cannot attend certain functions because you don't have clothes...when your roof leaks and you cannot change it...when you cannot travel because the transport fares are high...and when the school fees and allied demands are too much to bear... then poverty is the cause” (UNDP: 2006:36).

Regardless of how we perceive poverty, it is a state of long-term deprivation from essential material and nonmaterial goods or services which are considered necessary for human well-being and decent living. The problem is that there is no one single but various dimensions of well-being or decent living. According to UNDP (2009:63), a distinction should be made between “living standards, for which income or expenditure are adopted as indicators”, and issues of “rights, opportunities and capabilities of individuals”. With regards to developed or semi-developed economies, well-being as a measure of poverty may not necessarily be determined by actual consumption alone, but by other intervening factors which may include availability of opportunities and capabilities for consumption. In such situations, income will not be the only single variable to measure poverty. But for a subsistence economy and society like OBCs that are afflicted by oil enclivity, income is not only at the heart of survival, but a very significant means to understand poverty. This point is cardinal to our understanding the narrative of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons.

The World Bank (2006:8) has stated that economic and political inequalities which are highly associated with impaired institutional development, also contribute to poverty. This then means that poverty, which deprives and hinders individual development, is also rooted in and consequent to a number of social, political and institutional factors of a given society. Poor governance and the exclusion of particular social groups, such as minority ethnic groups, women and youth, from participation in decision-making on matters relating to their welfare, contributes to making people poor (UNDP (2006:37). Other factors that contribute to poverty also include environmental degradation, high levels of pollution, political conflict and insecurity, and threats to health and well-being of people.

As with the definition of poverty, it has also been extremely difficult to come up with consistently accurate and valid data to analyse the poverty profile and trends in the Niger Delta region. What is certain is that the poverty situation in the region may not be fundamentally different from that obtained in other regions of Nigeria (Higgins: 2009:1–4). Available data from different sources are sometimes not only contradictory, but their accuracy is mostly in doubt. It has been argued that since the advent of civilian rule in 1999, “the development gap between Niger Delta states and the rest of Nigeria has gradually lessened or even disappeared, although the degree is difficult to confirm” (International Crisis Group (2006c:12).

According to the UNDP (2009:63), total poverty head count which stood at 27.2 percent in 1980 jumped to 65.6 percent in 1996, with an annual average increase of 8.83 per cent over the 16-year period. It however declined between 1996 and 2004 by an annual average of 2.1 per cent to 54.4 per cent. Within the same period, the percentage of the core poor rose from 6.2 to 29.3 per cent, and declined to 22.0 percent in 2004. Given that over 50 percent of total population of Nigeria is officially poor, it means that regional differences or the unique circumstances of the Niger Delta may not attract special policy analysis or be of great concern to policy makers in Nigeria.

The United Nations Human Development Programme (UNDP: 2006:38) had earlier found that with few exceptions, the Niger Delta states are in fact doing better than other regions of the country apart from regional centres of Abuja, Lagos and Kaduna (also see Table 1.4). The same report interjects that the vast oil wealth has barely touched the lives of OBCs. This is because Niger Delta states do not invest enough resources in capital expenditures to provide a basis for rapid progress in human development. The report also argues that bad governance and corruption perpetuated the patterns of low level of human development in the region.

**Table 1.4**

Nigeria's human development summary statistics by zones, 2008

Zones	Human Development Index (HDI Value)	Human Poverty Index (HPI)	Gender Development Measure (GDM)	Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)	Inequality Measure (INQ)
North Central	0.490	34.65	0.478	0.244	0.49
North East	0.420	44.15	0.376	0.117	0.44
South West	0.332	48.90	0.250	0.118	0.42
South East	0.523	21.50	0.507	0.285	0.48
South South	0.471	26.07	0.455	0.315	0.38
North West	0.573	26.61	0.575	0.251	0.41

Source: Adapted from UNDP (2009), page 10:

What also aggravates the pervasiveness of poverty in the Niger Delta and makes it more acute than other regions is the impact of oil extractive activities. The point being made is that, just as oil extractive activities are confined to the Niger Delta, oil pollution of land and water resources and its impacts are equally restricted to the region. For instance, Okoko's (1999:375–376) study affirmed that the negative impacts of oil pollution result in the loss of subsistence occupations. Hassan (2002: et al.:1) also lament that years of oil production has led to “extensive damages of farmlands, streams and creeks”. As recent as September 2010, local women and youths in Ibeno had to embark on series of protests against Exxon Mobile over oil spillage which led to the decimation of fishery resources and a major a source of their subsistence occupation<sup>3</sup>.

The important denominator in understanding poverty in the Niger Delta is that; despite persistent problems associated with oil pollution, land and water resources remain the two main occupational pillars of the local subsistence economy. Other regions of Nigeria do not face this problem. This single factor largely explains why the poverty profile of OBCs has a tendency to be more pervasive and has continued to be a push factor in youth restlessness and militant violence (Ibeanu: 2002a:163–164, 2006). An expanded explanation by Alabi (2008:66–67) states that the higher unemployment rate in the Niger Delta has more to do with oil, which pollutes water and degrades land, destroys crops, depletes aquatic resources,

<sup>3</sup>See “ExxonMobil Oil Spill: Fishermen, Youths Revolt at Ibeno” in *Sahara Reporters*, New York, September 2, 2010, accessed on 20/12/2010, at: <http://www.saharareporters.com/news-page/exxonmobil-oil-spill-fishermen-youths-revolt-ibeno>

affects the occupational activities of farmers, fisher- men and women, and leads to starvation, malnutrition and poor health. The foregoing informs why Obi (2006a:6) states that the very fact of survival in the Niger Delta “is embedded in conflict” and “the struggle for the future is ambushed by more violence that sucks in young people”.

UNDP (2006:37) also drawn attention to the fact that while discussing poverty in the Niger Delta is region; “it is important to appreciate that price regimes for goods and services can be different from those of most other regions”. More so, prices are often higher in remote OBCs because “they are tied to the pricing of services in the oil and gas industry and the much higher earnings of oil sector workers”. It is this very income-disparity dynamic that “erodes the purchasing power of the ordinary person, heightening inflation in the costs of basic needs such as housing, transportation, health care, education and food products”.

The top ranking of the Niger Delta region on both the Human Development Indicator (HDI) and per capita income by UNDP (2009:40) has more to do with the 13 percent oil derivation revenue and other palliatives that accrue to all oil producing states. Given that the operational nature of the enclave oil economy is skewed against the local subsistence economy of OBCs; to what extent does per capita income growth explain poverty? Rather than per capita income, issues such as poverty eradication, education subsidies, employment generation, provision of ‘basic needs’ and ‘essential’ commodities and services, would be more appropriate and relevant to OBCs.

The social and economic challenges of OBCs are indeed about basic needs and survival. Anikpo (1996:23) has long acknowledged that these factors explain why “women, including school girls”, abandon school to engage in “scandalous, promiscuous” sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. To approach the problem from a basic need approach would counter-weight per capita income growth as a primary objective of development. Similarly, the concept of pro-poor growth or ‘growth with equity’, whose analytical thrust insists that economic growth and development must take cognisance of the relationship between growth, poverty and inequality (UNDP: 2009:3–9, 79–88), represents a better analytical option.

What the statistics on per capita income do not tell us though is that besides mismanagement of funds by corrupt elites in what the UNDP (2009:105) described as “corruption has under developed Nigeria”; there are other geographical factors that may also contribute to the problem of human development in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta is over 20,000 square kilometres and comprises the largest wetlands in Africa. It has a complex and delicate physical and human geography (World Bank: 1995; HRW: 1999:53). Its complex

terrain and drainage system requires massive construction of roads, culverts and bridges. Its delicate geography is further compounded by the polluting complications of oil extractive activities. The physical geography of the Niger Delta therefore posed objective difficulties for any meaningful human development. Benjamin (et al.: 2002:12) stressed that its difficult topology makes development costs compellingly high as development projects span long completion periods. Oyefusi (2008:540) equally attests that the “swampy terrain also makes the region the most difficult and expensive to develop, while the dispersion of oil installations and infrastructure across the region increases the ease with which the processing and transportation of oil can be interrupted by locals”.

These peculiar development problems of the Niger Delta, associated with the cost factor of development, may understandably explain why the region may have high per capita income, yet it is the least developed because of the cost of undertaking any massive construction work in this very difficult terrain. The geography of the Niger Delta and problems associated with the cost factor of development prompted Willink Commission report to recommend that the Niger Delta region be accorded ‘special’ development attention (Willink: 1958).

For the Niger Delta, issues of poverty go beyond per capita income because the critical issues that have a direct bearing on poverty, given the impact of oil extractive activities, are basic survival needs. These include but are not limited to “access to health care, education, water, transportation and other basic amenities of life, as well as the extent to which people are involved in decisions that affect them” (UNDP: 2006:37). The critical issue as it applies to the analysis of increasing incidence of poverty in the Niger Delta is the need to take cognisance that OBCs ought to be doing better than their present situation.

Given the considerable level of resources in their midst, the frustration and indignation of OBCs is understandable. It is in this context that they perceive themselves to be poor, regardless of what the national and international statistics on per capita income say. The foregoing in part explains why poverty rate based on self-assessment (or a perception index) would be much higher than official data will indicate. Higgins (2009:4) posits that disaggregated data at the local government level shows that local government areas in the Niger Delta without oil facilities appear to have significantly fewer poor people than those with oil facilities. Higgins’ analysis again reminded us not to run away from the fact that “the high earnings of some oil industry workers leads to localised price distortions, driving up prices and so constraining the purchasing power of ordinary people and making it difficult for

many to meet the costs of basic needs such as housing, healthcare, transportation, education”, thereby making poverty more pervasive than conventional economic statistics would reveal.

The Federal Government policy response to the challenge of poverty in OBCs is the preoccupation in chapter five, which discusses and highlights the major state palliatives. The criterion for choice of major state palliatives, reviewed in chapter five, is informed by the particular significance of each to the history of oil and human development in the Niger Delta. The next section meanwhile focuses on oil and women in the Niger Delta.

### **1.3 OIL AND WOMEN IN THE NIGER DELTA**

Since the advent of colonialism, men and women have often played different roles in the economy and society of Nigeria. This means that just as we have to disaggregate data when comparing the poverty profile in the Niger Delta with other regions; scholarly debate on the social dimension of the impacts of oil in the Niger Delta should begin to desegregate the issues so as to ascertain their specific effects on women. For instance, national estimates indicate that about 52 percent of Nigerians live in poverty and about 70 million people are living on less than 1 dollar a day (USAID: 2006:2). The same report indicates that Nigerian women are particularly disadvantaged because about 68 percent of households living in poverty are said to be female-headed (USAID: 2006:2).

Pearson (1993) has long warned that we cannot afford to continue to perceive or analyse social and economic problems from a generic gender neutral spectrum and then interrogate the effects on women at a later stage. Hassan (2000:23) argues that with specific reference to the Niger Delta, regardless of the extent to which the extractive activities of oil TNCs and the Nigerian state oil policies may be presented, there will always be peculiar social and economic ways in which women are affected differently from men. This point has equally been echoed by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD: 2004).

There is no doubt that the visibility of women in the Niger Delta oil debate has gained momentum amongst scholars (Adalikwu: 2007; Clark, et al.: 1999; Hassan: 2000:23; Hassan, et al.: 2002; Karubi: 2006; Okoko: 1999; Omorodion: 1993, 2004, 2006; Pearson: 1993). The focus of this study seeks to draw attention to the fact that Nigeria's oil enclave economy affects women in ways that are different from men, and that this differential impact of oil has not been accorded considerable scholarly attention. While the general focus of this study is to uncover the peculiar ways in which fall-outs from oil affect women in the Niger Delta, the main objective seeks to interrogate the extent to which social and economic circumstances

created by oil extractive activities contribute to the emergence of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local Niger Delta women and expatriate oil workers. Sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate workers are perceived in this study to be a voluntary coping strategies freely adopted by local women in the Niger Delta.

The Niger Delta has indeed attracted considerable scholarly debate, but the focus of this study is that despite increased awareness of the central role played by women in the growth and survival of OBCs (Moffat: 1992; Onyige: 1996:1), there are still many salient ways in which oil extractive activities threaten the livelihoods of women and that need to be investigated. One such way is the intersection of oil and the phenomenon of sexual liaisons. The focus of this study is on the need to delineate the social linkages between oil as an enclave; the social and economic challenges that women face as a result of such linkages; how such challenges cumulatively exacerbate the economic situation of women and generate a tendency for local women to engage in sexual liaisons with well paid expatriate oil workers. The thesis of this study is that the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between expatriate oil workers and local Niger Delta women is largely a function of income disparity and is also rooted in an oil enclave economy that alienates OBCs.

Part of the challenge for not focusing on the peculiar ways in which oil affects women in the Niger Delta, has relatively more to do with the fact that the history of development policies in Nigeria and palliatives for OBCs did not give considerable attention to the peculiar ways in which oil marginalises women. This began during the colonial era, continued through the immediate post-colonial period and into the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Adalikwu: 2007; Adebipe: 2004; Akintola: 2000; Akpan: 2009; Allen: 1972:166; Edogun: 1996:136–137; Hassan et al.: 2002; Iromuanya: 2008:1–5; Karubi: 2006).

Like the history of their counterparts in other Sub-Saharan African countries (Boserup: 1970:15–36), Niger Delta women have always constituted part of the work force in subsistence agriculture, either as farmers, fisher-women or in other sub-sectors of the informal sector. Some scholars (Iyayi: 2005), as well as advocacy groups (Amnesty International: 2009; Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law: 2000; International Crisis Group: 2006a), have maintained that Niger Delta women have had to bear the brunt of Niger Delta's paradox of 'want in the midst of plenty'. Worse still, the suffering of Niger Delta women seems to pass by unnoticed. Given that until quite recently, Niger Delta women have rarely been singled out for scholarly scrutiny over the impact of oil enclave activities, a study of the intersection of oil enclavity and the level of material well being of women in the

Niger Delta region; is necessary to facilitate our understanding of the dynamics of oil and women in the Niger Delta region.

History has shown that Nigerian women themselves have not been passive. As women become impoverished, marginalised and aggrieved, they have begun to spontaneously engage in struggles for justice (Ekine: 2008). Since the colonial era, the struggle of women for justice has often attracted considerable national and international attention when it threatens to do what is regarded in Nigerian popular parlance as “sitting on a man” (Allen: 1972:165, 1988:59–85; Dike: 1995; Grosz-Ngate and Kokole: 1997). ‘Sitting on men’ literally means women engaging in public protest against perceived injustice either against them as a group or for public interests. This can take three different forms. The first is in the form of a women’s village-level strike or protest action. In this case, women lay siege to the man’s compound and forbid anyone to cook for him. This form of women protest is relatively specific to the Igbos of South Eastern Nigeria.

The second form of ‘sitting on men’ is the bare-chested protest by women, which is specific to the Yoruba of South Western Nigeria. This form of women protest is always directed against political authority. As recent as April 2010, bare-chested elderly women protested against electoral verdict in Ekiti state by marching on major streets in the state capital Ado-Ekiti, demanding the release of results of the governorship re-run election. In this case, the spiritual dimension of protest by bare-chested elderly women donning white wrappers, most of whom wore no shoes, was a warning to the federal government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) about the consequences of tampering with the wishes of the people as expressed during the poll<sup>4</sup>.

The third form of women protest, which is also the conventional or generally regarded as the ‘normal’, draws its energy from the 1929 Abba women uprising in South Eastern Nigeria which sought redress on several socioeconomic and political grievances against the colonial state (Afigbo: 1972; Akpan and Ekpo: 1988; Umoren: 1995:61). The conditions leading to the 1929 uprising included the social structure of the colonial economy which was skewed against women, and the economic exploitation of the general population, such as the taxation of men and threats to extend such taxes to women (Umoren: 1995:62–65). Other

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<sup>4</sup>See “Ekiti: Breasts better than bombs”, by Femi Adesina, Daily Sun, Friday, October 22, 2010, accessed on 30/12/2010, at: <http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/columnists/femi/2010/femi-oct-22-2010.htm> Also see “...”women stage protest in Ekiti” by Ifedayo Adebayo, in Next News Online, April 30, 2009, accessed on 30/12/2010, at: [http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Home/5409942-146/Naked\\_women\\_stage\\_protest\\_in\\_Ekiti.csp](http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Home/5409942-146/Naked_women_stage_protest_in_Ekiti.csp)



grievances include demand by women “for the cancellation of rent payment for the women’s market shed, abolish fees for licenses to stage women’s dances and the dismissal of Mark Pepple Jaja as Chief of Opobo Town” (Umoren: 1995:66). The intensity of this uprising was such that the women also demanded that “even men should no more be taxed” (Umoren: 1995:66) by the colonial state. This uprising was a strategic anti-colonial revolt organised by women from six ethnic groups in south Eastern Nigeria (Ibibio, Andoni, Ogoni, Bonny, Opobo, and Igbo).

Women have also been an active force in the mobilisation leading to resource conflicts in the Niger Delta region. Ikelegbe’s (2005a:241) study holds that the Niger Delta women protest engagements have always expressed “their exasperation with previous engagements, the depth of their commitments, and the extension of the struggle beyond the threshold of normal social behaviour”. Although the main focus of this study is not on the role played by women in resource control contestations in the Niger Delta, it is however important to acknowledge that the general marginality of women in the Niger Delta, which is a function of the enclavity of oil, does form a basis for the emergence of gendered movements and female agitation in their “struggles for justice, accommodation and fair access to benefits” (Ikelegbe: 2005a:241).

Reminiscent of the Nigerian women’s anti-colonial struggle, Niger Delta women are the wives, mothers and widows of the men who are killed in the conflicts and insecurity that has racked the region for over 50 years (Hazen and Horner: 2007:15–18). Women are also the ones that have little or no access to education, are unemployed, and are the most sexually exploited by the better paid expatriate oil company male workers and abused by state security forces. Salaam-Ogunniran sums it up:

Women suffer great hardships in times of conflict. The women of the Niger Delta are no exception. During the conflicts with oil companies and the Nigerian government, women are subjected to all kinds of violence – sexual violence such as rape, physical violence such as beatings, maiming and murder, and destruction of properties. Niger Delta women suffer unimaginable human rights abuses for which redress is unattainable because the agents of government who perpetrate the abuses "cannot" be subjected to the rule of law. Husbands, fathers and sons have been killed or maimed in the conflict and women have had to assume burdensome responsibilities as the heads of households<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>Salaam-Ogunniran, T. (2007): *Nigeria – Women’s burdens demand socialist action, March 7*, <http://www.socialistnigeria.org/page.php?article=1222>

In this sense then, it would not amount to an overstatement to say that women are the most marginalised group in the Niger Delta. Over the years there has gradually been increased public attention drawn to women's intermittent peaceful struggles and spontaneous protests against oil transnational corporations (TNCs) in the region (Dadiowei: 2003; Doran: 2002; Ikelegbe: 2005a, b; Turner: 1997; Turner and Oshare: 1993; Ukeje: 2004). This growth in awareness has however not led to a considerable and deeper analytical understanding of the sociological and economic ramifications of the salient impact of the oil enclave economy on the women folk.

Iromuanya (2008) reviews how Ken Saro-Wiwa deploys critical poetry and farce to satirise contemptible social conditions of women and children resulting from colonial and neo-colonial contraptions in the Niger Delta. She underscores how he weaves poetry, plays, short stories, collection of essays, political treaties, children's stories, folklore and television drama series, to drive home the message on the contributions of Niger Delta women and children to the struggle against oppression and exploitation. Iromuanya (2008:1-2) "examines the feminist poetics of Ken Saro-Wiwa's methodology of protest" in a way that utilises "gendered pathos" to "evoked the female body as a metaphor, signalling a connection between the colonization of the land, indigenous peoples, and women in his speech". Julie Iromuanya also adds that "his work more appropriately represents Africana womanist thought" and that his politics that are "an emulsion of communally-oriented, gendered, spiritual and environmentally conscious poetics are much in line with Africana womanism" (Iromuanya:2008:2).

Using the lenses of Ken Saro-Wiwa's classical works to buttress the contribution of women to the struggle in the Niger Delta, Iromuanya (2008:2) rejects the attempt by Western feminists whose evaluation of Saro-Wiwa suggests that his work is essentially an "embodiment of... an ecological feminist perspective". According to her, "to label Ken Saro-Wiwa an ecological feminist would be a misnomer, a reductionist misappropriation of a complex traditional African cosmological scheme". She continues thus:

In his attempts to resist what he called, 'indigenous colonialism' and 'environmental genocide,' Saro-Wiwa created a uniquely Africana womanist rhetoric of protest. By evoking the female body through his speech and mass demonstration, Saro-Wiwa's rhetorical strategy inspired a regional issue to become an international one. This reading does not suggest that Saro-Wiwa spoke *for* her, but rather *through*

her. In his poetics, he utilized the 'female' body in two distinct ways: in one sense, the female body became a metaphor for environmental and cultural genocide. In another sense, the peaceful mass demonstration he is best known for, culminating on January 4, 1993, was clearly derived from cultural gender-specific methods. In sum, what marks Saro-Wiwa as an Africana womanist is his communally oriented redeployment of traditional Africana resistance methods

(Iromuanya: 2008:2).

However, there is a critical and important component of the problem that has been omitted and neglected. This is the fact that women are indeed the ones who bear the brunt of the problem. The epistemic dimension of this specificity needs to be articulated and integrated into the sum total of the analytical instrument and policy options. Women can not just be used as instrumental tools for peace building in the Niger Delta. In the search for a road map to socioeconomic empowerment of the Niger Delta people, security and recovery of the Niger Delta, women should be organically part and parcel of the epic centre around which the analytical search engines for a resolution orbit. Scholarly works on the historiography of the Niger Delta have shown that the extraction of hydrocarbon deposits has been wholly concerned with revenue generation, without adequate monitoring of its environmental and socioeconomic outcomes on inhabitants of the region (Akpan: 2009; Feltenstein: 1992:273; Watts: 1987a, 1987b, 2006, 2008d). There has however not been adequate attention paid to the extent to which the oil alters women's livelihoods.

It is within this context that this study seeks to delineate how the consequences of oil enclave extractive activities in the Niger Delta region have pushed women to unconventional and less satisfactory alternative sources of occupations and means of livelihoods. Sexual liaisons between local Niger Delta women and expatriate oil company male workers constitute one of such outcomes. This study seeks to adequately comprehend the extent to which the phenomenon of sexual liaisons keys into the general anatomy of oil dynamics. Besides the generic perceptions that poverty is one of the fundamental socioeconomic factors that contribute to sexual liaisons, there are also stereotypical, moral and theological puritan contentions that women who engage in sexual liaisons (even if the liaisons are not in direct exchange for monetary rewards) are 'morally bankrupt' (Aderinto: 2007:2-3; Anikpo: 1996:23; Asakitikpi and Oyelaran: 2000:180-182; Izugbara: 2005).

It is difficult to sustain any attempt to moralise the narrative of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. Rather, this study seeks to bring to the fore the complex and multiple factors that are inherent in oil enclavity and that push and pull local women into sexual liaisons with expatriate oil company male workers. The context on which this study is constructed is that

the social and economic challenges associated with dispossession by oil enclave structure have a direct association with the phenomenon of sexual liaisons, and how it all builds into the incidents of youth militancy and insecurity in the region. This study also seeks to explore the human development implications of the phenomenon on both the women involved in the practice and the larger OBCs.

The focus of this study on women does not in anyway claim that women are the only ones affected by oil. But scholars like Omorodion (2004) have tended to paint such a picture. She argues that the Nigerian petroleum industry, as well as oil TNCs, “capitalises on cultural factors through its gender segregation and inequality” in the Nigerian society “to attain its goal of profit maximization through practice of male inclusiveness in the activities of petroleum refinery to support the supremacy of male economic livelihoods over that of female” (Omorodion: 2004:1). The fact is that like their male counterparts, Sub-Saharan African women have also shared in the cost of development in the continent (Boserup: 1970; Brydon and Chant: 1989; Dankelman and Davidson: 1994; Parpart and Staudt: 1990). The concern of this study is on the profound adverse impact of oil extractive activities on the natural environment and the associated socioeconomic effects on human development. And the main focus of the study happens to be on women and not men.

The emergence of oil understandably raised the hopes of both Nigerian men and women for development. This is what Ogbonna (1979:111–186) describes as “expected gains and local benefits from oil”. In “their innocence” (Hassan, et al.: 2002:3), Nigerians in general and OBCs in particular believed that the Nigeria state and oil TNCs “were equally interested in, and committed to their development” (Hassan, et al.: 2002:4). As the Nigerian state and oil TNCs continue to exhibit a shared “common interest in the maximization of profit and primitive accumulation of capital at any cost” (Hassan, et al.: 2002:4), it became apparent that the welfare and development of Nigeria had at no time been an integral part of this ‘shared interest’ in the oil industry (Duruigbo: 2005; Zalik: 2004:401–402). This explains why OBCs are often described as the “goose that lays Nigeria's golden egg” (African Network for Environment and Economic Justice – ANEEJ: 2004:ii). Duruigbo (2004) argues that the operation of Exxon-Mobil, which began in the 1970s in Eket and Ibeno areas of Akwa-Ibom state, results in the loss of fish populations along the coast. He laments the situation thus:

Community members, unable to afford houseboat engines and trawlers to venture into high seas, are left with little option but to buy fish from commercial

fishermen... Therefore, not only does the local population lose the earning potential of the fishing industry, it also is forced to incur expenses that were not the norm before the advent of oil production in the area (Duruigbo: 2004:129).

Our focus on the oil and women is a call to action because women are the most affected by the unregulated activities of oil companies in the Niger Delta; yet, adequate scholarly dialogue has not been paid to the impact of oil activities on women's livelihoods, the specific socioeconomic life challenges they faced as women and coping mechanisms they adapt to survive (Hassan et al.: 2002:14–15, 17–19). Okoko (1999:376) and Robson (1999:379–389), also call for shifts in the disclosure of the impact of oil exploration on women's livelihood challenges in particular.

Like all rural areas in developing countries (Brydon and Chant: 1989:47–54), women's activities in rural Nigeria have greater emphasis upon household consumption. The economic history of the Niger Delta shows that women have been very active and make substantial contributions to household survival (Okoko: 1999:376–377, Adalikwu: 2007:44–45). Ebere (2009:7) places the narrative in perspective:

As with women in other parts of the globe, Niger Delta women retain certain economic responsibilities within the family as wives, mothers and farmers. First of all, they are the principal care-givers of their children and the aged. Even though they are the 'food producers, procurers and preparers,' they are also expected to be significant wage earners. This is because the intra-household income distribution patterns and the rise of women-headed households in Nigeria, coupled with servile poverty, force them to take active financial role in their families. Since most of them are uneducated and therefore unemployed outside the home, their main source of income is agriculture where they 'comprise 60–80 per cent of the agricultural labour force and account for 90 per cent of family food supply'.

Omorodion's (2004:5–10) and Karubi's (2006:11) studies focus on the extent to which women in the Niger Delta suffer economic deprivation as a result of the impact of oil extraction on women's subsistence occupational activities, which include fishing and agriculture. The threat posed by oil extractive activities exacerbates the situation beyond that usually imagined. This is because rural livelihoods and household survival also depend on the income generating ability of women. There is therefore an urgent need to focus on the impact of oil on local women's livelihoods and survival strategies.

Of scholarly concern to this study are the social and economic particulars of the impact of oil extractive activities on women. It has been argued by UNDP (2006:4) that oil exploratory activities in the Niger Delta operate in ways that provide a few odd jobs to

unskilled Niger Delta indigenes. But such jobs are always scarce and do not always go round. Addressing the social and economic context of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta, Duruigbo (2004:133) argues that it is an “offshoot of petroleum development”; and that “some young women who cannot find decent employment, or whose families cannot afford the costs of higher education”, engage in sexual liaisons with oil workers “to make ends meet”. He also adds that some women and girls who are “lured by false promise of easy money by expatriate oil workers” tend to see sexual liaison “as a legitimate means of reaping the benefits of oil production”.

To make matters worse, “women’s low economic status hinders their ability to negotiate sex” (UNDP: 2006:4). The problem is not only that the devastating socioeconomic circumstances are forcing many women into sexual liaisons as a means of survival; but that the phenomenon itself generally contributes to increase the population of ‘fatherless children’ (Clark, et al.: 1999:10–11). Anikpo (1996:22–23) argues that besides degrading and polluting the natural environment, the oil economy stimulates growth in general merchandise, which impacts negatively on oil producing communities in several interlocking ways. Expatriate oil company workers always have extra cash to spend and accept what ever price for any item of trade. On the contrary, the problem of joblessness, mass under employment and restlessness, armed militancy, inter-group conflicts, and a general atmosphere of despair and violence has continued to plague host communities (Auta 2007; Iyayi 2005; Obi 2006a). Indigenous oil bearing communities are therefore confronted with the dilemma of reconciling their meagre subsistence with paying high prices for basic survival needs. Asakitikpi and Oyelaran (2000:180–181) note that “this inequality in settlement pattern and life style is usually a source of constant tension” and is responsible for attacks on oil company workers. Rabah and Ali (2009) have also acknowledged that income differential is a central problem of enclave economies, especially for local communities where such extractive industries operate.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What are the social and economic factors responsible for the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta?
- What are the nature and dynamics of sexual liaisons in the region?
- What are the implications for parties affected by the liaisons, especially for the local women and indigenous communities?
- What are the human development implications for the Niger Delta region?

- What role, if any, does this phenomenon play in the deepening crisis of civic instability and militant violence in the region?

## **1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

The specific goals of the study include the following:

- To critically examine the socioeconomic contexts of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate male oil company workers in the Niger Delta region. Of significance here are the matrixes of socioeconomic factors responsible for the phenomenon of sexual liaisons, its nature and dynamics.
- To investigate and analyse the perspectives of individuals involved in such liaisons. It is hoped that this will enable the development of a social profile of the phenomenon under examination.
- To examine the social consequences of sexual liaisons on women/girls involved in the practice and repercussions for cohesive and peaceful inter-group relations in the delta region.
- Assess the implications, if any, of such liaisons for the deepening civil unrest, high profile violence, armed militant activities, kidnapping of expatriate oil company workers and general state of insecurity in the delta region.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Since the 1990s, violent conflicts in Sub-Saharan African countries have been linked to contestations over natural resources. This remains a paradox where resource-rich African countries are plagued by widespread poverty, primitive accumulation of wealth by the ruling elite, maladministration, political instability and wars (Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law: 2000; International Crisis Group: 2006a; Obi: 2008b; Open Society Institute: 2005; Palley: 2003; Renner: 2004: 2; Robinson et al.: 2006). Hydrocarbon mineral deposits and other natural resource capital have failed to lead to development in resource rich African countries. Rather, natural resource revenue feeds into corruption and fuels violent conflicts (International Crisis Group: 2006b, WAC Global Services: 2003). But, consistent blame heaped on 'resource curse' trajectories has only contributed to blurring of our analytical search lights. This study is significant in the sense that it shifts attention from the 'resource curse' chorus to focus on the specific dialectical and material basis for the problem in the Niger Delta.

In the Niger Delta, women, adolescent girls and the youth remain the powder keg. Unable to get proper schooling or stable employment, they constitute a 'reserve army' for social discontent. Frustration associated with aspirations makes women and the youth of the Niger Delta very volatile and cynical towards overtures by the Nigerian state, oil TNCs and the International community. If differences of gender inequality and class are addressed, a productive community relations and conflict resolution system would be facilitated in the Niger Delta. Over the years, economic reform policies and programs designed and directed by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and implemented by the Nigerian governments have continue to ignore the differential impacts on men and women. Decision-making mechanisms in the country have continued to turn a 'blind-eye' to the need to incorporate specific socio-economic challenges confronting Nigerian women (Afonja: 1986, 2007a, b, c). The significance of this study is that it seeks to address women specific challenges in the Niger Delta.

Given the central role played by the Niger Delta in Nigeria's political economy and regional security, this study is a major challenge to peace and development in the region. A major escalation of the Niger Delta debacle could destabilise the country and the neighboring sub-regions (West and Central Africa) and impact negatively on the fragile peace in regional neighboring post-conflict countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire (Obi: 2008b). An understanding of how sexual liaison plays into the dynamics of this problem will provide policy suggestions aimed at providing a framework for resolution. Findings from this study would form part of the ongoing interventions aimed at peace building and de-escalating conflict in the Niger Delta region and beyond.

## **1.7 SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter one provides the context within which the ontology of oil enclavity and sexual liaison is discussed and understood in this study. In this chapter, the integral issues on the social dimensions of oil enclavity and the distortion of local subsistence economies are introduced, discussed and elaborated. The chapter discusses how the coping strategies of OBCs have a direct relationship with the operational dynamics of the enclavity of the oil project and the practice of sexual liaison. Chapter two provides the theoretical thrust of the study by reviewing the enclavity economy paradigm.

Using Mhone's *enclave economy paradigm*, chapter two tries to address why oil mineral enclave economies, such as the situation in the Niger Delta, continue to distort local



subsistence economies and render the majority of the population unemployed or underemployed. This is what Mhone (2001:36) “termed the problem of low absorptive capacity of African economies”. The chapter acknowledges that history and enclave structure of oil mineral enclaves in African countries have always resulted in the marginalisation of the majority of the population and exclusion from engaging in productive activities that would result in sustainable increases in living standards. On how to overcome problems associated with enclave economies, Mhone (2001:35) highlights the “need to reprioritize recurrent and capital expenditures by the state so that they are directed toward the desired restructuring”. He particularly calls attention to the fact that “the all too ubiquitous non productive expenditures by the state need to be redirected toward productive activities”.

Chapter three discusses the social characteristics of oil enclave economies and the phenomenon of sexual liaisons. It also interrogates the extent to which the oil enclave project in the Niger Delta is a site that self-generate conflict as well as gender-specific sexual violence against women. This chapter also review the literature on the social and economic challenges that confronts ‘fatherless’ children who are product of sexual liaisons. Chapter four focuses on the research methods adopted in this study. Chapter five interrogates government palliatives put in place to alleviate poverty in the Niger Delta, as well as examines Community Development Projects and strategies put in place by oil TNCs to try and retain its Social Licence (SL) to operate around hostile OBCs. An analytical critique of the failure of oil TNCs’ community development and outreach programmes geared towards addressing women specific problems in the Niger Delta is presented. Chapter six presents a profile of the women involved in sexual liaisons and examines the socioeconomic basis for this involvement. Chapters seven and eight present the field data derived from the phenomenology of oil enclavity and sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta.

Chapter nine summarises and concludes on the research findings. The chapter draws from the lessons that can be learn from the example of Botswana’s enclave economy successes. This chapter explores the political foundations of development in Botswana. In particular, it examines how the legitimacy of the political system and its political institutions produce economic growth in Botswana’s diamond enclave economy. This chapter argues that standard explanations of enclave economy hypothesis such as corruption, poverty, unemployment, sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate workers, restlessness and violent conflict do not apply to Botswana. The chapter argues that the usual suspects of resource mismanagement do not explain Botswana’s enclave economy growth record. The chapter tries to answer the question of why Botswana’s government has been able to promote

development while so many sub-Saharan African enclave economies, especially Nigeria, have failed.

## **CHAPTER 2: ENCLAVE ECONOMY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

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### **2. INTRODUCTION:**

The enclavity economy paradigm is a phenomenon in which countries with abundant natural resources tend to have lower economic growth than other resource-poor nations. It manifests differently from country to country and from one society to another. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, extractive industries have always generated wealth but distort the local subsistence economies and alienate the majority of the indigenous population where such extractive activities are located. This is what informs some advocates of the enclave economy hypothesis to recognise that natural resources have a negative impact on growth if considered in isolation, but a positive direct impact on growth if other intervening variables, such as corruption, investment in social development of local stakeholders, transparency and accountability, are included (Papyrakis and Gerlagh: 2004:181). Collier and Hoeffler (2005:627) state: “large resource rents are not intrinsically a curse. They obviously have the potential to accelerate peaceful development, and this potential has occasionally been realized, as in Botswana. Hence, the search for conditioning circumstances is a key research agenda: clearly, in some circumstances resource rents induce or prolong conflict, and in others they do not”.

On paper, regions where enclave extractive industries are located may even have high per capita income compared to other regions in the same country, yet the indigenous population where the industry is located would still live in relative poverty. This is the case with the Niger Delta where the statistics show that there is a higher per capita income than in other regions of Nigeria (UNDP: 2009), yet OBCS live in relative poverty in what has been code named in popular parlance as “want in the midst of plenty” (International Crisis Group: 2006a), “blood barrels” (Ross: 2008), “stolen oil”, “blood oil” or “blood oil business” (Asuni: 2009), Watts’s (2003) “economies of violence” or “more oil, more blood”, and many other names including ‘the paradox of plenty’, and ‘resource curse’ (Fofack: 2009). It also generates intense restlessness amongst such communities.

The same applies to enclave economies of Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and to some extent Sudan. Because the oil industry is an enclave which serves the interest of oil TNCs and the ruling elite, it has little or no impact on the general population. But because of the easy money that comes from the sales of oil, economic growth and the per capita income would seem to be high. In relatively more stable enclave economies like Botswana, where the ruling elite are more nationalistic, the economic situation of the majority of the population does not look as pathetic as that elsewhere in Africa.

Enclavity therefore implies the coexistence of two interrelated segments of the economy and society. It entails the existence of separate sets of economic processes within the same political or national social boundary or sovereignty. The first segment engages in a formalised system of social and economic activities based on an extractive mineral enclave nature. The extractive enclave is propelled by foreign TNCs in collaboration with the local ruling elite. The major driving force of enclave economies is maximum accumulation of profit from resources extracted. The drive to maximise profit from investment implies logically that the local subsistence economies where the extractive activities are located are distorted and in most cases dislocated.

The implications are also that the members of the indigenous population are displaced from their normal social and economic activities. Some of the local population may be forced to migrate, others may be co-opted into the formal economy of the enclave economy, yet many others may become restless and destitute. The discussion of enclave economy paradigm in this chapter draws largely from the analysis of Mhone (2001, 2007). He demonstrated very clearly that there was no way enclavity could be overcome without the pro-active role of the state, the interventionist role of the state in creating employment and in addressing all kinds of disfunctionalities in the system that make African economies so externally oriented. And central to the role of the state is what he called a 'strategy for agrarian and industrial transformation. The chapter adapts his model for such transformation to occur on the continent, which he thought would be applied to different parts of Africa irrespective of the particular way in which enclavity was locally articulated. His model attempted to develop an interesting taxonomy of enclavity, which developed the hierarchy of enclave economies and the kinds of ways in which gains and losses from the workings of the enclavity flowed to the more powerful in the hierarchy. In this chapter, I draw examples from across Africa and elsewhere to make the case for the enclave economy paradigm.

## **2.1 THE ENCLAVE ECONOMY PARADIGM**

One of the dominant figures in the discourse of enclave economy is Mhone (2007, 2001). It is therefore pertinent to revisit his theory in order to explain why mineral extractive enclaves continue to distort African subsistence economies, generate unemployment, underemployment and poverty for the majority of her citizens. Bond (2007:32) describes Mhone's enclave economy paradigm as a rich metaphor that tells us "a coherent story of the linkages – or lack thereof – between capitalism and non-capitalist terrains of life via distorted labour markets, racial discrimination, and the 'double jeopardy'". Mhone drew attention to the ways in which emerging capitalist sector in sub-Saharan Africa is structured and how it functions, as distinct from the informal or subsistence sector which it distorts. This emerging capitalist sector is largely extractive in nature.

Mhone (2001:2) began by acknowledging that majority of the citizens in most sub-Saharan African countries "continues to be either openly unemployed or under-employed" when many other developing economies "that were similarly placed about three decades ago have made the crucial turn toward more inclusive growth and development". The situation continues to change for the worse ten years after his publication. Mhone threw out a challenge thus: "The problem of the low labour absorptive capacity of African economies strikes at the heart of the growth and development problematique and should not be dismissed lightly by appealing to the long run impact of trickle down effects or the possibility of people lifting themselves up by their boot-straps as a result of the efficacy of market mechanisms. It is necessary that the debate about the paradigms informing various policy stances be opened anew" (Mhone: 2001:2).

After a critical review, Mhone's enclave hypothesis paradigm came to the conclusion that African economies are "afflicted by a legacy of enclave growth and development which is partly a legacy of the manner in which capitalism penetrated these countries as late comers on the global development scene; and partly as a consequence of the failure of various policy regimes of both the socialist and market oriented types to address the structural roots of the problem through policies of omission and commission" (Mhone: 2001:3). With particular focus on southern Africa, Mhone (2007) argues thus:

...the resulting economic structures were not so much dualistic as much of early development literature was prone to characterise them, but as trimodal: they consisted of a relatively dynamic formal economy driven by its economic relations with the metropole, the erstwhile coloniser, and inter-linked in an unequal relationship with the communal and informal sectors internally. The relationship between the three sectors

is characterised by various market discontinuities, gaps, failures with respect to the distribution of economic assets such as land, capital and human capital; the flow of and returns to labour, and goods and services; the provision of economic infrastructure and social services, and the nature of institutional support and the regulatory environment. Now all of the countries in Southern Africa inherited tri-modal economic structures dictated by colonial imperatives along the lines described above.

(Mhone: 2007:5–6)

The enclave economy paradigm assigns the problem of low labour absorptive capacity of African economies to the structural legacy of enclavity. Mhone (2001:3) recommends that beside the “usual market friendly measures”, the implementation of proactive policies are now required “to undo the vicious circle of perpetual under-employment that afflicts the majority of the labour force” (Mhone: 2001:3). The issue he addressed is that several years after exposure of African economies and societies to capitalism in the colonial and post colonial period, the structure of the majority of African labour forces remains unemployed and under-employed. With the exception of South Africa with a high of about 45%, Mhone (2001:3) submits that the fact that the formal sector is considered as the most productive and dynamic part of African economies, but accounts for less than 20% of the labour force, requires theoretical explanation. Mhone pointed out that the fundamental reason for this situation rests on the fact that majority of the labour force in many African economies is “engaged in non-formal economic activities primarily of a survival nature”. These “non-formal activities are in subsistence agriculture and or in other informal activities.

With a situation in which many able-bodied Africans are either under-unemployed, unemployed, or depend on subsistence means of livelihood, Mhone’s enclave economy hypothesis also states that for the majority of Africans, survival is a real struggle. In other words, the persistence and pervasiveness of under-employment has fundamental economic and social implications. The first implication is that from the point of view of economic efficiency, the fact that a significant proportion of Africans depend on the subsistence sector of the economy to survive means that human resources remain under utilised, and this represents what Mhone described as “a constraint and a drag on economic growth and development”. This is because “economic development loses its meaning if economic growth does not entail the involvement of the majority in productive economic activities and the upliftment of their standards of living” (Mhone: 2001:3).

On the social implications of under-employment and unemployment as characteristics of enclave economies, Mhone observes that such a situation has great potential to generate all manner of social problems as people struggle to survive at all costs. At the social level, the

under-employment or subsistence survival means that individuals in this segment of the enclave economy are “relegated to a self-reproducing and self-reinforcing destiny of under-employment in the context of an enclave and dynamic capitalist formal economy” (Mhone: 2001:5) and therefore “do not produce and earn enough to ensure that they have decent standards of living” (Mhone: 2001:3). The social consequences of enclavity especially its associated under-employment or subsistence survival “are easily seen in the low life expectancy rates and the high incidence of health and social maladies such as high infant mortality rates, all of which are well known” (Mhone: 2001:3). Thus, the persistence of under-employment or distortions of subsistence economies by the emergence of enclave economies should be of interest in the sociological study of sexual liaison as a survival strategy adopted by local women in the Niger Delta.

There are aspects of enclavity that can pose a problem for a developing country. This relates to the fact that, for the majority of the population, the means of livelihood is outside the formal employment structures of the enclave extractive industry be it timber, plantation or mineral extraction. According to Mhone (2001:5), this majority population is therefore “trapped in pre-capitalist forms of production, which are by their nature not driven by the incessant capitalist need to employ labour for the sake of profit and further expansion of capital”.

The foregoing situation is not surprising because even in non enclave economies of Africa, Mhone (2001:7) eloquently argues, “capitalism as a mode of production was supplanted onto primarily subsistence forms of production organised along communal lines” As such “capitalism in Africa and in Southern Africa did not arise through the transformation of agrarian subsistence forms of production and the simultaneous emergence of capitalist forms of production that encompassed both agriculture and industry and the commodification of almost all of the active population, except perhaps housewives”. What this says is that capitalism emerged in Africa without the need to transform both her agriculture and industry, as well as without the need to commodify all of the active population, the majority which remains outside the sphere of influence of capitalist means of production.

In enclave economies the majority of the population continue to be trapped in non-capitalist forms of production and engaged in low productivity in their pursuits for mere survival. This is the case with OBCs in the Niger Delta. The oil extractive sector control by oil TNCs is like the capitalist sector, which Mhone (2001:7) labels as, “the formal sector, exists as an enclave in a sea of under-employment, which we shall refer to as the non-formal sector”. This is not to say that the enclave economy paradigm is the same as economic

dualism. According to Mhone (2001:7), “it is not so much defined by separateness as by inter-relatedness... the problem is that this interrelated coexistence presages a vicious circle of proneness to economic stagnation and the marginalisation of the majority rather than a virtuous circle of dynamic transformation as occurred in the now developed countries”.

In a review of Guy Mhone's thesis, Olukoshi (2007:12–14) identified key eight characteristics of enclave economies. The first is that enclave sectors are usually propped up by foreign capital and could be merchant, industrial, service or financial. But most often, it is a conglomerate combining all. Secondly, beside the fact that the enclave sector is a high capital intensive venture, it also survives on the exploitation of massive labour surplus. In this case it “basically sucked in the most skilled strata of the labour force, whether it was a racialised labour market or not” (Olukoshi (2007:12).

The third characteristic is that, because the enclave sector is structured in a way to facilitate large-scale production, “it exercised a host of monopolistic or oligopolistic advantages” through the use “of market mechanisms to establish control, but also the use of extra-economic means, including political intervention and coercion, in order to secure advantages in the market to exercise monopoly or to exercise oligopolistic advantages” (Olukoshi (2007:12). Hence, TNCs have privileges and a strangle hold on the enclave economy. Fourthly, as a terrain dominated by foreign capital, the enclave sector is also distinct “by being the arena of the expatriates, and all kinds of political economy associated with the fact that the enclave was the upper arena for an expatriate investing or managerial elite” (Olukoshi:2007:12–13). Within the context of southern Africa, enclavity was distinctly racial capitalism. And what it does is that the role of local entrepreneurs or indigenous economic actors was either distorted, absent completely or was subordinate to the foreign enclave investor.

The fifth characteristic of enclavity has to do with its external orientation of the African economies. This is what is regarded as “the ‘extroverted nature’ of the African economies” (Olukoshi: 2007:13). Extroversion means that the enclave economy plays a nucleic role in this vulnerability of African economies that began in the 1960s through 1970s. Mhone's 1982 study of the crisis that afflicted the Zambian copper industry, as well as his later work on ‘vector economies’, enclave economies of Botswana and Namibia, came to the conclusion that these were manifestations of the Dutch Disease syndrome, which owes its existence to the enclave nature of these economies. Export orientation, which is the core of enclave economies, is not normally driven by any form of internal logic, but by external logic. The drive by enclave economies to capture opportunities in the external markets implies that no



attention is paid to the development of the domestic economic forces. Without the development of the domestic economic forces or home market, it would be extremely difficult if not impossible to create an effective demand for goods and services by an unemployed and impoverished population. The consequence is that enclave economies are prone to “many degrees of instability, ranging from cyclical crises such as in Zambia during the collapse of the copper economy, to the kinds of crises that the apartheid economy experienced on account of the enclave nature of the accumulation process” (Olukoshi: 2007:13).

The sixth characteristic of enclave economies has to do with the fact that the state plays a critical role by supporting and developing the enclave sector, but ignores the informal or subsistence sector. In the words of (Olukoshi: 2007:13), “there has been no case of an enclave economy, anywhere on the continent, in which the state has not been the foremost guarantor of enclavity”. Olukoshi also adds that the enclave sector is profitable because the state provides “security, tax holidays and the government’s liberal grants to foreign investors active in the enclave sector through tariff walls erected to give them protection against external competition as import substitution”. What this entails is that the policy thrust in enclave economy is such that the state provides incentives to the enclave sector, but nothing for the informal or subsistence sector.

It is on the basis of this that a strong linkage or web of linkages is maintained between the enclave economy and its international market, in an organic periphery-centre relationship. In that way, the enclave economy is an enclave, because “it structured to respond to an external logic and not a domestic logic” (Olukoshi: 2007:14). He also adds thus:

My starting point is to observe that the concept [of enclavity] itself has a long history, in developmental debates and in developmental thinking. The practices that gave rise to the concept have an even longer history, attested to by the structural form of the earliest trading ports and forts that were established along the African coastlands following the very first contact between Europe and Africa. The links of many of these ports are still in existence mostly as tourist attractions today, but nevertheless points to, in many respects, the emergence of enclaves of economic development.

(Olukoshi: 2007:8)

This organic linkage is not limited to developing countries. Depending on the strength of their economies, some developed economies can be affected by such linkages. A related analysis of globalisation and its impact on social inequality in Australia and New Zealand

from the 1980s to the mid-2000s, a period in which both countries opened up their markets in response to pressures of globalisation and pursued neo-liberal economic policies, was conducted by McClelland and St John (2006). They submit that poverty and inequality increased, and suggest that “that pressures from globalisation are difficult to resist in the long run, but there may be lessons to be learned from the New Zealand experience if more negative outcomes are to be avoided” (McClelland and St John: 2006:177). They also argue that ‘social exclusion’ is an important dimension in the process of social, economic and cultural globalisation (McClelland and St John: 2006:178). Giddens (2000, 2001), as well, suggests that when social and economic exclusion of globalisation are combined with market-oriented or ‘neo-liberal’ economic policies, it becomes part and parcel of an important aspect of the process of cultural globalisation. Given the absence of active social welfare nets that could work to reduce or alleviate poverty (Gilbert: 2002) in enclave economies like Nigeria, economic uncertainties reign supreme among the population, the majority of which are poor.

In the case of the Niger Delta, the social formations are consequent to the existence of oil enclaves and the distorted subsistence economy, on which majority of her population are still trapped in an uneasy and seemingly tenuous co-existence dominated by the oil enclave. Historically, the general expectation has been that oil wealth would transform and absorb the local economy in a progressive way. But this has not happened. Ross (2008:2) describes the social and economic effects of oil enclave economies thus:

The oil booms of the 1970s brought great wealth -- and later great anguish -- to many petroleum-rich countries in the developing world. In the 1970s, oil-producing states enjoyed fast economic growth. But in the following three decades, many suffered crushing debt, high unemployment, and sluggish or declining economies. At least half of the members of OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) were poorer in 2005 than they had been 30 years earlier. Oil rich countries that once held great promise, such as Algeria and Nigeria, have unravelled as a result of decades of internal conflict.

What the foregoing seems to say is that while the enclave economy is formal, because it is a mineral extractive industry that requires high skill labour, most of the local population are unemployable because they lack the requisite professional training and skills. What then happens is that they are limited to their informal social and economic subsistence system. Part of the problem is that the majority of the local population remain marginalised and trapped in a distorted low-productivity subsistence economy. The foregoing dichotomy constitutes the challenge facing enclave economies in Africa. Higgins (1959:281) takes up

from there by submitting that enclavity “is one of the distinguishing features of underdeveloped countries”. In a relatively detailed description, Higgins states that the dichotomies inherent in enclavity are because:

...virtually all of them have two clearly differentiated sectors: one confined mainly to peasant agriculture and handicraft...the other consisting of plantations, mines, petroleum fields and refineries, large-scale industries, and the transport and trading activities associated with these operations. Levels of techniques, productivity and income are low in the first sector and high in the second.

(Higgins: 1959:281)

With particular focus on southern Africa, Mhone (2007) tries to distance the southern African enclave structures from the dual economy literature. According to him:

...the resulting economic structures were not so much dualistic as much of early development literature was prone to characterise them, but as trimodal: they consisted of a relatively dynamic formal economy driven by its economic relations with the metropole, the erstwhile coloniser, and inter-linked in an unequal relationship with the communal and informal sectors internally. The relationship between the three sectors is characterised by various market discontinuities, gaps, failures with respect to the distribution of economic assets such as land, capital and human capital; the flow of and returns to labour, and goods and services; the provision of economic infrastructure and social services, and the nature of institutional support and the regulatory environment. Now all of the countries in Southern Africa inherited tri-modal economic structures dictated by colonial imperatives along the lines described above.

(Mhone: 2007:5–6)

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:1) queries and laments that often the enclavity of the economies of developing countries is misunderstood and misinterpreted:

...the illusion of the twenty-first century is that the North and the South have ‘common interests’ that are equally beneficial to both regions of the world. This illusion has culminated in the false belief in mutual ‘partnerships’ between the North and the South. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) emerged within this false terrain. It is a terrain that is fed by the equally misleading twentieth century illusion of a decolonised Africa that came into being in the 1960s. This was a grand illusion because to all intents and purposes, decolonisation failed to extricate the African continent and its people from the snares of colonial matrix of power. What happened in the 1960s was that Africa managed put down the lighter yoke of direct political colonialism to take up the more heavier but hidden yoke of coloniality of power.

Legassick (1976) holds that the exclusionary structure of enclavity contributes to the inability of developing economies to take inclusive development pathways, thereby marginalising the majority of her people. The foregoing prompts Olukoshi (2007:8) to elaborate thus:

The concept of enclavity has a long history, in developmental debates and in developmental thinking. The practices that gave rise to the concept have an even longer history, attested to by the structural form of the earliest trading ports and forts that were established along the African coastlands following the very first contact between Europe and Africa. The links of many of these ports are still in existence mostly as tourist attractions today, but nevertheless points to, in many respects, the emergence of enclaves of economic development.

Amin (1974) perceives the nucleus of African enclavity to be located on the continued structural dynamics of capital accumulation on a world scale. Enclave economic structures are not usually eliminated when a colonised country gains political independence. Instead, such structures are merely re-configured into a neo-colonial socioeconomic entity that goes further strengthens entrenchment of enclavity, caused by neo-colonial economies continuing to sustain both the short and long term interests of metropolitan Europe (Cooper and Stoler: 1997:vii). This is what Emmanuel (1972) refers to as 'unequal exchange' and what others see as 'dependency' (Baran: 1957; Dussel and Yanez: 1990; Frank: 1974; Rweyemamu: 1969). Olukoshi (2007:8) places the debate within a relatively elaborate historical perspective:

...the metaphor of the *Coast* and *Hinterland*, capturing many of these relationships before actual colonial rule was imposed, gives us a good idea of the important roles that the earliest enclaves played in Africa's economic history. But in the context of recent history, the concept itself has been associated mostly with intellectual and policy concerns about how to come to grips with the impact and legacy of colonialism. And earliest intellectual attempts to come to grips with this question, particularly as independence began to dawn across the continent, emerged from within the discipline of economics. Economists specializing in the developmental prospects from the emerging countries were particularly preoccupied with what they saw as a dualist structure in the economies of African countries, particularly between the so called *traditional* and *modern* sector.

(Olukoshi: 2007:8)

Dependence on Europe and North America (Frank: 1969, 1974, 2004) has continued to serve as a clog in the wheel of social and economic transformation of developing countries. This perhaps prompts Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:2) to aver that the African continent "today

finds itself in a *zombified* state” and that the “*zombification* was created via colonisation”. Developing economies are therefore considered enclaves because they are essentially dependent and constrained by external factors.

Implicit in Africa's enclivity is the absence of an internally motivated and conscious process of economic transformation. With an unfettered domestic economic development, global capitalist forces marginalised and peripheralised the international market process beyond the reach of African countries. In the process, the African labour force, the peasantry and the unemployed are marginalised. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:2) argues that from colonial contact, the African continent was “a continent whose destiny was stolen and never fully recovered either through nationalism or decolonisation”. Imbedded in the discourse of enclivity and dependency, is the fact that internal constraint marginalises the poor in general and women in particular. Internal constraint is perpetuated by a market-led policy thrust that dominates African economies but is unable to completely transform them into working capitalist systems.

Escobar (2007:185) observes that: “coloniality of power is a global hegemonic model of power in place since the conquest that articulates race and labour, space and peoples, according to the needs of capital”. Continuing on the externality and enclivity of the Nigerian colonial economy, Heap (1996:70) states that the “limited revenue base, coupled with the pursuit of only commercial policies, guaranteed that successive colonial governments were not directly involved in the economy.” Rather, “they acted as custodians of law and order and provided infrastructure to promote overall trade expansion.” The consequence was that the Nigerian colonial economy “was skewed in favour of external trade” (Heap: 1996:70) and structured to nurture her capacity to export primary products (Pugh: 1994). Heap (1996:70), also contends that, as an enclave, Nigeria was also meant to absorb “imported manufactures” because this “was a key concept of development in the colonial era.” Liedholm (1970:54) argues that the contribution of Nigeria's manufacturing sector to the national economy was deliberately insignificant. In 1950, it accounted for only 0.45% of GNP, the “smallest proportion of any country in the world producing data” (Heap: 1996:70).

The paradox however is that virtually everything, from “cotton cloth, stockfish, pots and pans, umbrellas, scissors, bicycles, to beer and spirits” (Heap: 1996:70) was imported within the same period. These imports were heavily taxed by the colonial state and the proceeds were used to run “the fiscal health of the colonial government” (Heap: 1996:70). To demonstrate the enclivity of the Nigerian colonial economy, there was no Minister for

Industry. In its place, “a Board of Trade preaching the gospel of Free Trade” (Heap: 1996:70) was inaugurated to run Nigerian affairs on commerce, trade and industry.

The enclave economy paradigm therefore raises questions on strategies for a resolution. This is because the historical context of Africa's enclavity has direct bearing on the livelihood challenges her people are confronting today. The dialectics of African enclavity have crystallised around neo-liberalism that has pushed and pulled her economies deeper into the snares of exploitative global capital. This reality led Badiou (2001:iv) to observe that Western insistence on “‘democratic’ totalitarianism with its ‘miserable moralism’ under which Africans are obliged to accept the prevailing way of the world and its absolute injustice”, cannot take us to the promise land.

Although African countries are politically ‘independent’, a number of economic issues arising from the colonial past continue to affect the continent. One of these issues is the pursuant of neo-liberal inspired stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes and economic policies in the 1970s through the 1990s. Under the colonial era, African societies did not voluntarily open their economies, but did so under duress. Domestic policies were guided by the economic interests of the metropolis. The critical questions raised over adjustment policies is not whether or not African economies are globalised enclaves, but under what conditions the process of enclavity has continue to unfold and why. It must be pointed out however that not all colonial economic production activity is enclave. Africa's faster growing economies with very high per capita income like Botswana are steeped in enclavity.

Cypher and Dietz (2004:95) warn that the economic enclave structures in developing economies would be difficult to erase because “the lingering effects of colonial control are not quickly or even easily cast off”. This is because “colonisation created productive structures designed not to exploit the potential comparative advantages of the dominated economy and its people.” They posit further that instead, “the coloniser organized production, particularly export production, around an extremely narrow array of tropical agricultural products, minerals, and other primary commodities to supply the colonisers’ needs.” They also note that the structures of enclave economies will continue to persist because the production process does not take place within a real “free market context”, but in “a framework of domination and control”.

Baran (1957) provides an insightful analysis to enable us understand the critical relevance of enclave economies to the working anatomy of global capitalism. He points out that embedded in enclavity of developing economies are externally imposed distortions.

Baran argues that rather than being catalysts for industrial development, enclave structures in developing countries constitute the very locus or clog, which impedes industrialisation. He states:

...it is not railways, roads and power stations that give rise to industrial capitalism: it is the emergence of industrial capitalism that leads to the building of railways, to the construction of roads, and to the establishment of power stations. The identical sources of external economies, if appearing in a country going through the mercantile phase of capitalism, will provide, if anything, "external economies" to merchant capital. Thus the modern banks established by the British during the second half of the nineteenth century in India, in Egypt, in Latin America, and elsewhere in the underdeveloped world became not fountains of industrial credit but large-scale clearing houses of mercantile finance vying in their interest charges with the local usurers. In the same way, the harbors and cities that sprang up in many underdeveloped countries in connection with their briskly expanding exports did not turn into centres of industrial activity but snowballed into vast market places providing the necessary "living space" to wealthy compradors and crowded by a motley population of petty traders, agents and commission men. Nor did the railways, trunk roads, and canals built for the purpose of foreign enterprise evolve into pulsing arteries of productive activities; they merely accelerated the disintegration of the peasant economy and provided additional means for a more intensive and more thorough mercantile exploitation of rural interiors.

(Baran: 1957:193–194)

Paul Baran's essay on *The Political Economy of Growth* has been described by Mhone (2001:6) as perhaps one of the earliest "to call attention to the fact that developing countries that had been colonized had inherited a special type of social formation in which the capitalist sector of the economy was grafted onto pre-capitalist forms of production in a manner that was distorted". Baran particularly explains that an enclave type of capitalism did not pose its own imperative for dynamic transformation, growth and development of developing countries. This is so because the enclave economy is essentially dependent on and constrained by external factors. Implicit in Baran's position is the contention that in the absence of an internally motivated conscious process of transformation the growth process within an unfettered domestic economy, and especially the distortion of subsistence sector; would not only marginalise the majority of the population, but would also marginalise the developing country itself in the international arena.

Lewis (1954, 1976) approached the enclave economy paradigm from a slightly different angle while borrowing heavily from classical political economists, such as the works of Marx, Ricardo and Malthus. He made similar argument as Baran (1957, 1966,

1970), but from within conventional economics, as opposed to the avowedly Marxist perspective of Baran. In what he regarded as 'enclave development and growth', Lewis focused on the exploitation of under-employed labour in developing economies by TNCs. His work elaborates on the unique enclave situation of developing economies which had inherited what Mhone (2001:6) described as "a capitalism that had been grafted onto their societies from external sources and agents rather than internal ones".

It is important at this juncture to differentiate between Baran's and Lewis's theses on the enclave paradigm and dependency school. While both are Marxist in orientation, the dependency school tends to concentrate much more on the manner in which global forces marginalised and peripheralised developing economies that were colonized and that were late comers into global capitalism. Therefore, the focus of dependency theory stresses the unequal consequences of interactions between developing and developed economies with respect to trade, aid and foreign investment flows (Leys: 2005). Bienefeld (1988) acknowledges that while the dependency theory could be relied upon to stimulate lively debate in the mid seventies (Leys: 2005:112–113; Smith: 1979:247–248), Sautter (1985:180–181) in particular notes that "nowadays it seems to arouse little interest", because "many of the central tenets of dependency theory have since had to be qualified, to some extent as a result of empirical studies by the theory's proponents themselves".

This especially has to do with the dependency theory claim to explain underdevelopment and its recommendations as to the development strategy to follow. The enclave paradigm, for instance, explains the peculiar situations in enclave economies, which the dependency theory just treats as a generic problem of "exploitation and dependency" (Sautter: 1985:180). With particular reference to the enclivity of developing economies, the dependency theory does not pay adequate attention or elaborate on the actual material circumstances that prevail in the developing countries, especially the internal structural constraints to equitable distribution of income amongst the local population or more inclusive growth in mineral extractive enclave economies.

Babu's (1981) position is that Western self-interests shape international politics, and to remain within the orbit of global capitalism means perpetuate enclivity for African economies. Mashingaidze (2006:65–66) argues that corrupt and autocratic governments in the developing world are supported and defended by the West, as long as they preserve, sustain and protect Western political, economic and strategic interests. This accounts for dictators such as the late Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, and Emperor Jean-Bédél Bokassa of The



Central African Republic. In the early days of his rule, Idi Amin in Uganda received solid support from the West.

On the application of Rostow's (1956, 1959, 1960a, b) "stages of growth", Brett (1973:16) and Rodney (1972:9–10), argue that there are no already fixed or static stages that all human societies must pass through before arriving at 'development'. Rodney contends that 'development' is neither a product of fixed stages nor an accidental occurrence of economic growth. Rather, it is a result of the history of contradictions in the production and distribution of material resources in any given human society. Rodney's thesis holds that in all human societies, development is a function of the nature of interaction between growth, economic production, equity in the distribution of the social product, and autonomy in control over social processes. Rodney contends that underdevelopment and development can only be terms put into use to compare levels of development of societies and not to be perceived as an original stage. Rodney contextualises the contemporary economic enclavity of the global south as a distorted structural condition generated by the effects of the deepening European hegemony imposed over the rest of the world since the fifteenth century.

Baran's and Lewis's approaches are not only similar, but still very relevant in understanding contemporary enclave economies like the situation in the Niger Delta because of one fundamental reason. This is because their analyses point to the fact that underdevelopment of developing economies lay "first in elaborating the nature of internal constraints to market-led growth given the presence of high levels of under-employment in a social formation dominated but not completely captured by capitalism; and second, in demonstrating the interactive nature of external and internal factors in perpetuating the predicament that these countries found themselves in unless specific interventions are undertaken" (Mhone: 2001:6). This makes Baran's and Lewis's theses on enclavity very relevant today even if Marxism has become obsolete in the minds of some scholars.

## **2.2 CONCLUSIONS:**

The extent of enclavity in the Nigerian oil sector is such that its exogenous implant and modus operandi do not allow for the emergence of an internal accumulation and transformation process that would have captured the majority of the population of oil producing communities. Mhone (2001:36) explains the continuation of this enclave scenario to be the "consequence of the uncritical acceptance of the enclave formal sector as the engine of growth" (which in the Nigerian case is the oil sector), and partly to result from "the belief that trickle down effects from formal sector growth would eventually absorb the rest of the

labour force into productive activities". But this has not happened in the case of the Niger Delta region in particular and Nigeria in general.

This chapter therefore submits that, given the problem of Nigeria's oil industry, which is firstly linked to its enclavity and secondly, endures mismanagement of huge revenues from oil, it would be very difficult to overcome and resolve the enclavity. Rather, the situation looks as though it will continue to be reinforced as both oil TNCs, the ruling elite and OBCs struggle for a share from the 'oil booty'. The Nigerian state palliatives and oil TNCs community development projects are more beneficial to the enclave oil sector because these are policies meant to secure social licence to operate but not meant to address the enclave structure of the oil industry, which is skewed against oil producing communities. Such measures may result in increased absorption of a few people in the oil sector, but not enough to result in an absolute reduction in the numbers of unemployed and under-employed people in OBCs. The foregoing informed why Mhone recommends:

...pro-active measures by the state are needed to restructure the productive base of the economy by making it more inclusive of the majority of the labour force. The idea is to have the currently unemployed and under-employed captured by the imperative of capitalist accumulation thereby precipitating a virtuous circle of interactions that have a broad and dynamic long term impact on the economy. This is accomplished through a number of interventions that broaden the asset and income entitlements of the majority of the labour force by formulating policies that decidedly have a bias toward those activities that would absorb such people more. An initial broad base of productive employment, even if at initially low levels of income provides a long term basis for inclusive and equitable growth than a small employment base with high levels of income.

(Mhone (2001:36)

For the proposed outcome to be achieved, Mhone (2001:37) calls for "a shift in paradigms away from the trickle down assumptions of current conventional economic policy regimes to one informed by the structural limits of the enclave model of growth and one guided by the need to pro-actively restructure this legacy in order to launch a basis for more inclusive development". Mhone's advocacy for a central role for the state, if developing economies are ever to overcome enclavity, is indeed courageous. Mhone (2001:35) states "from what has been said so far a paradigm shift is needed there is need to appreciate the fact that the market on its own may not be able to precipitate the necessary structural changes required to enhance labour absorption, hence the need for pro-active measures by the state, even if within a market context that respects stabilization conditionalities to some degree".

Given that Marxist analysis and the public sector role in African economies have been discredited by the World Bank, and given the ongoing ideological onslaught on the world economy by agents of neoliberalism, Olukoshi (2007:21) suggests that Mhone's recommendations would look like "living in the past" and are "completely irrelevant to the current discussion".

## **CHAPTER 3: OIL ENCLAVITY AND SEXUAL LIAISONS IN THE NIGER DELTA**

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### **3 INTRODUCTION:**

This chapter discusses the social characteristics of oil enclavity and the phenomenon of sexual liaisons. It reviews the characteristics common to oil enclave economies. The chapter interrogates the intersection of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons with oil enclavity and fatherless children. The chapter reviews the manifestation of sexual liaisons under colonial enclaves. The chapter also discusses the tendency for oil enclaves to produce other forms of gender-specific sexual violence against women. For instance, state military raids against restless and militant youth groups are said to be characterised by flagrant human rights abuses including looting, flogging, extortion, gang rapes and other forms of sexual abuse against local women. This aspect of the social dimension of oil affects mostly the female gender (African Woman: 1995).

#### **3.1 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF OIL ENCLAVE ECONOMIES**

Most developing countries, whose economies depend primarily on natural resources such as oil, diamonds, or timber, generally suffer from greater poverty and score low on the UN Human Development Index, which is an annual report on the general quality of life for citizens. Such countries are also more at risk for conflict than countries whose economies are more diversified. The problem is that the paradox of crushing poverty in the midst of wealth has more to do with two fundamental factors. First is the distortion of subsistence economy and its sustainable safety nets by enclave extractive activities, which compromise the survival baseline of indigenous people located where the extractive activities are intense. The second is that extractive industries generate instant wealth but the problem becomes that of how to manage this sudden wealth in a prudent manner. The paradox in the case of Nigeria is that oil wealth has failed to generate growth and has actually increased the number of Nigerians living on less than \$1 a day, from 30% before oil was discovered to the current rate of 70% (UNDP 2006, 2009). This prompts Eifert (et al.: 2003:1) to lament:

The economic record of mineral-exporting countries has generally been disappointing. Oil exporters, in particular, have done far less well than resource-poor countries over the past few decades, especially when one considers the big revenue gains to the oil-exporting countries since 1973, when oil prices soared. Why is this the case? Perhaps it is because of the way oil economies are run. Managing oil revenues well is much the same as managing any budget well, but some issues are more important for oil exporters. These include how much to save for future generations, how to achieve economic stability in the face of uncertain and widely fluctuating oil revenues and avoid “boom-bust” cycles, and how to ensure that spending is of high quality, whether in the form of large investment projects, public consumption, or subsidies.

One of the characteristics of oil enclavity is the economic syndrome known as the ‘Dutch disease’. Named after the social and economic problems that beset the Netherlands in the 1960s after she discovered natural gas in the North Sea (Ross: 2008:2), the ‘Dutch disease’ (Imi: 2006:18) is about the social and economic problems that afflict a country when it becomes a significant producer and exporter of natural resources like oil and gas. What happens is that rising resource exports push up the value of the country's currency as well as per capita income. Thus, other sectors of its economy or exports, including manufactured and agricultural goods, become less competitive abroad. The consequence is that the export figures for products in those other sectors eventually decline, thereby depriving the country of the benefits of dynamic manufacturing and agricultural bases and leaving it dependent on oil extraction. Dependency on oil extraction also means that the rhythm of the country's economy and society would be at the mercy of often volatile international oil prices. In the case of Nigeria, the oil boom of the early 1970s caused agricultural exports to drop (see Table 1.1). The Nigerian agricultural sector is yet to recover. It should also be interjected that “despite its conceptual plausibility, the empirical evidence for Dutch disease is mixed and is mostly on a country case basis” (Rabah and Ali: 2009:3).

The enclavity of oil mineral is also associated with the tendency for the sudden glut of revenues (Eifert: et al.: 2003:1). This is a situation in which “few oil-rich countries have the fiscal discipline to invest the windfalls prudently; most squander them on wasteful projects” (Ross: 2008:2). For example, the governments of Kazakhstan and Nigeria spent their petroleum incomes on building new capital cities and “failed to bring running water to the many villages throughout their countries that lack it” (Ross: 2008:2). One of the most apparently distinctive characteristics of oil enclaves relative to most other primary commodities is its high value relative to its costs of production. What explains this is that

there is a fundamental disparity between extractive commodities when it comes to rents surplus over costs and normal profit. Rents on oil mineral are of course much larger than rents on other commodities such as agricultural products (Collier and Hoeffler: 2005:628).

Dependent and mismanaged mineral enclaves do not only have problems in terms of economic growth, “but also in terms of risks of violent conflict, greater inequality, less democracy and more corruption” (Shaxson: 2007:1123).

The foregoing also gives an insight into why oil rents are differentially important to both oil TNCs, the Nigerian government and of course OBCs whose local subsistence economies are distorted. It also explains why the enclavity of oil generates unemployment and poverty, and has forced OBCs to adopt unconventional survival strategies to cope. It is these very factors that all combine to make oil enclaves prone to greater conflict risk (Collier and Hoeffler: 2005:628). Part of the explanation according to Fearon (2005:487) is that corruption and the mismanagement of oil wealth provide fertile grounds for the emergence of rebels or militant groups, because they can easily “turn to smaller-time extortion”. An extended description of this is what Ross (2004:342–344) describes as “booty futures”. This is a situation in which rebels or militant groups sell the future resource exploitation rights to foreign companies or states. This has been manifested in the case of Equatorial Guinea.

Fearon (2005:483) came to the conclusion that the risk of enclavity is largely confined to oil enclaves. He specifically states that “oil predicts civil war risk not because it provides an easy source of rebel start-up finance but probably because oil producers have relatively low state capabilities given their level of per capita income and because oil makes state or regional control a tempting “prize” (Fearon: 2005:483). These are some of the reasons why especially corrupt oil enclave dependence economies like Nigeria are particularly risky. The point is that oil has continued to generate large location specific rents for oil TNCs, the Nigerian states and its ruling elite, but not for the local OBCs who live where the extraction of oil occurs. Oyefusi (2008:539–540) argues that dependency on oil rents not only “leads to exposure to shocks arising from world price volatility, discoveries and exhaustion”, but can “create multiple routes that link to civil conflict”.

There are countries that have been able to avoid the effects of oil enclavity, while others remain embroiled in resource conflict. Apart from countries such as Canada and Norway (Eifert: et al.: 2003:7–6) that have avoided these ill effects of enclave nature, developing countries in the Middle East and Botswana (Iimi: 2006:1) have also been able to avoid the extreme impact of enclave economies. But citizens of many more oil-rich countries continue to have low incomes, less effective governments, and a high incidence of poverty

that makes citizens susceptible to adopting all manner of survival strategies to cope with the situation. Sexual liaison in the Niger Delta is one such social outcome of oil. The question then is why Botswana succeeds where many natural resource rich African countries have failed? According to Ross (2008:1–2), oil mineral enclave economies are not unique; “diamonds and other minerals produce similar problems”. The impact of oil mineral enclivity is widely felt because it is “the world's most sought-after commodity, and with more countries dependent on it than on gold, copper, or any other resource, oil has an impact more pronounced and more widespread”.

The thrust of the oil enclave economy hypothesis as it applies to the oil enclave in the Niger Delta holds that besides the maximum revenue that accrues to oil TNCs, which is often taken out of the country as capital flight, the income that these natural resources generate for the country is equally misappropriated by corrupt political leaders and officials instead of being used to support national growth and development. Those who are immediately affected are OBCs. This is because oil extractive activities are associated with environmental degradation, pollution and loss of subsistence occupations. Besides the loss of occupations or subsistence means of livelihood, such communities become restless. Therefore instead of oil wealth bringing growth and development, it breathes anger and often fuels internal grievances that cause conflict and civil instability. The discussion of the socioeconomics of oil enclave economy in this chapter therefore provides the conceptual basis that will help make sense of the social and economic factors that can best explain why local women and school girls in the Niger Delta region would adopt sexual liaison as a coping strategy.

Using the enclave economy hypothesis, I shall briefly explain why the abundance of oil minerals has led to an entrenched culture of rent-seeking, widespread poverty and civil conflict in the Niger Delta region. In comparison, similar oil resources have contributed to robust economic growth and increases in per capita income resulting in high living standards in the Middle East, Asia, and Europe, with the addition of Botswana as the exception to the African rule. Since the 1970s, the petroleum industry has been the main driver of both the Saudi Arabian and the Nigerian economies. But Saudi Arabia experienced a remarkable economic transformation as a result of government revenues and export earnings from oil. Social efficient exploitation of oil resources and rational allocation of their revenues helped to transform Saudi Arabia, a kingdom of nomadic pastoralists, into one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Recent statistics place Saudi Arabia's official foreign assets at more than \$330bn. These figures are significantly above the total stock of external debt owed by all sub-Saharan African countries to their foreign creditors (Fofack: 2009:1).

While oil mineral extractive activities may be regarded as an enclave entity, they do not generate the same social and economic problems in all countries. What is certain according to Sachs and Warner (1997:2) is that the ability of an enclave economy to generate growth, high per capita incomes and improved social indicators is largely a function of consistent implementation of policies that are underpinned by a highly inclusive social contract. While this is true for most Gulf States such as the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and other even more populous countries like Malaysia, who have also made the most of their natural resources to improve the living conditions of their people, it is not the case in oil enclaves like Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and many other countries in Africa. On the relationship between natural resource richness and economic growth, Sachs and Warner (1997:2) conclude that “one of the surprising features of economic life is that resource-poor economies often vastly outperform resource-rich economies in economic growth”.

By the same token, oil mineral resources have contributed to significant advances and economic development in a number of industrialised countries particularly Norway, where the discovery of oil in the late 1960s triggered a development process which has since resulted in impressive outcomes. This is the way Fofack (2009:1) sums it up:

According to recently published UN statistics, Norway has the highest human development index, reflecting a sustained income growth and effective re-distributive policies. Norway's annual GDP per capita has increased more than threefold since the 1970s, exceeding \$41,000 in 2006. This is at odds with the poor performance of resource-endowed nations in sub-Saharan Africa. African countries occupy the bottom positions of the UN Human Development Index, irrespective of their resource endowment. The contrast between Norway and Saudi Arabia and the resource-rich nations of Africa on the development ladder is often explained by the 'resource curse' argument.

### **3.2 OIL ENCLAVES AND COMMON COPING STRATEGIES**

Men and women adopt different coping measures. Men employ tactics that enable them to directly generate and make a living from the oil operations through theft, sabotage, oil theft, kidnapping of oil expatriate workers, asking for compensation of payments. For the women it is very difficult to adopt these methods because of their gender. For instance, vandalism or sabotage of oil infrastructure constitutes the gateway to oil theft and bunkering. Given the masculine nature of this alternative means of survival, it is open only to the male folk. According to Amnesty International (2009:14–15), men “damage pipes while trying to steal small quantities of oil for sale at local markets or for personal use”, yet, “others damage

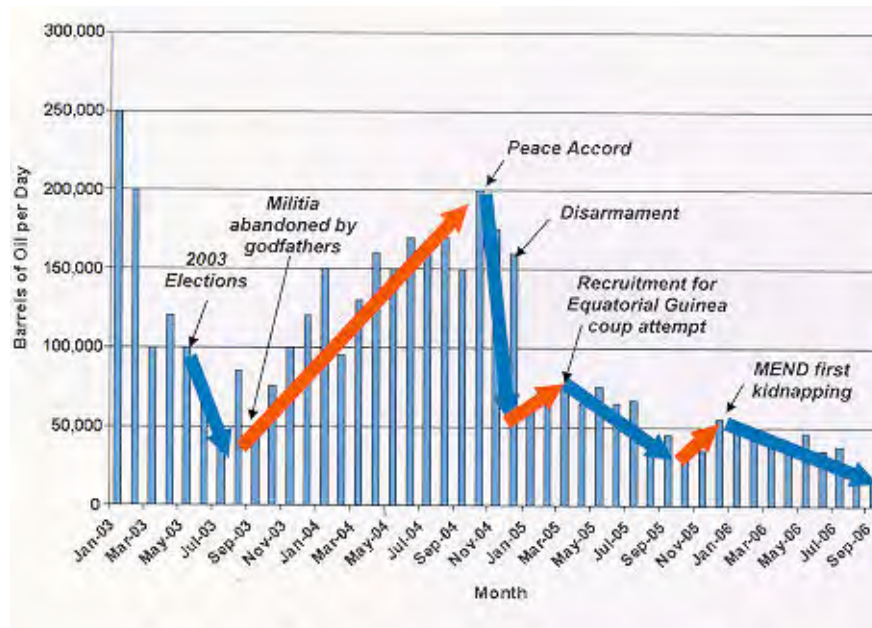


pipes and installations to extort compensation payments” from oil TNCs. Amnesty International therefore argues that sabotage activities have a strong economic survival importance to the extent that “causing an oil spill and getting a clean-up contract or compensation” is one way individuals and groups from OBCs “can access any benefit from the oil operations” (Amnesty International: 2009:14–15). Since December 2005, attacks on oil facilities and spate of oil worker kidnappings have in some cases forced oil production shutdowns of up to 800,000 barrels per day and undermined Nigerian government’s initial projected plans to double production to four million barrels a day by the end of 2010 (International Crisis Group: 2006b:1, 5–7).

While this study does not endorse any form of violence or sabotage of oil facilities, scholars like Kahn (2006:31–33) submit that sabotage based on “marcusean politics and culture of social intolerance is legitimate under contemporary circumstances”. On that note, Kahn argues that sabotage should be seen as a rejection by indigenous groups of enclivity, neo-liberal and imperialist hegemonic dominance of the oil sector. In the context of this study, although radical ecological politics have relevance in the case of the Niger Delta, because of its syndication as well as masculine orientation, it has not been articulated in ways that it could be beneficial to the majority of oil bearing communities, including a majority of the women who are the most affected.

The entrenched syndicate of oil bunkering or clandestine hijacking of crude oil barges as well as expatriate oil workers constitutes a burgeoning illicit black market economy that is immensely beneficial to those engage in it. It has come to a point where the black market often competes with the Nigerian “domestic legal economy of energy supplies and international deliveries” (Orogun: 2009:463). For instance, the Royal Dutch Shell plc reported in February 2009 that theft of crude became a major problem when it “calculated that oil operators are losing up to \$1.6bn of crude a year, meaning some 100,000 bpd being stolen by thieves who bore holes in pipelines or take oil from wellheads before selling it as far away as Brazil and Eastern Europe” (Fortis Bank Energy Monthly: 2009:7) (Figure 3.1).

The structures of economic opportunity, embedded incentive patterns and mechanisms utilised by syndicates operating in the Niger Delta region, therefore serve as a strategic choice constraint on a majority of local women. The simple fact is that oil bunkering syndicates engage in what Orogun (2009:464) describes as “pipeline vandalism, occupation of flow stations, kidnapping of expatriate oil workers and audacious attacks against the more distant off-shore production facilities”.



**Figure 3.1** Level of crude oil theft in the Niger Delta and conflict events 2003–2006

Source: Adapted from Davis (2008), p 18

Even the Federal Government of Nigeria acknowledges the technical sophistication of crude oil bunkering activities by brigands who target specifically vulnerable arteries of the oil refineries and complex networks of infrastructures within the Niger Delta oil enclave, and has since put in “requests for an international regime of Crude Oil Finger Printing- COFP” (Orogun: 2009:464). This attests to the economically devastating effects of the combined activities of oil bunkering, which in turn have led to diminished production capacities and reduced revenues for the Nigerian state. The foregoing are technically sophisticated and risky engagements that many women in the Niger Delta cannot readily undertake as an alternative means of survival. This also explains why local women would rather engage in sexual liaisons or be used as bait by militants to lure expatriate oil workers than participate as active agents at the front.

The second social challenge, which also rests on the first, is the phenomenon of kidnapping of foreign oil workers and using them as bargaining chips for ransoms. Like the first, this alternative means of income generation is largely carried out by men. While women can be used to lure foreign oil workers to be kidnapped, they do not necessary carry out the actual kidnapping themselves. They are also not always involved in the negotiations of the amount of ransom to be paid. The ransom is usually negotiated and collected by men. The concern of this study is not the quantum of benefits derived from these unacceptable, erratic, and dangerous coping or income generation mechanisms. Our focus is on the fact that the

economic benefits accruing from these unconventional coping measures go directly to men. Men may collaborate with women to sabotage oil facilities and kidnap foreign oil workers, but the economic benefits, no matter how minimal, go directly to men and not women.

Echoing the official interplay of the foregoing two intertwining issues, Omorodion (2004:8) observes that men also “earn income from the monetary compensation negotiated and paid by oil companies to the indigenous governing council for the exploration of crude oil”. The issue is not just that these traditional councils are predominantly male, but that there is rapid development of an oil imbroglio, or what Orogun (2009:463) refers to as “increasing nexus between the vicissitudes of oil extraction and the disintegration of traditional authority patterns”, which is driven by “the emergence of new forms of politics and intra-ethnic as well as inter-communal protest movements and insurgencies”.

Within such a context, it is a historical fact that youth groups have themselves emerged as part of the increasing disenchantment with perceived corrupt and compromised legitimacy of traditional leaders and their councils. Traditional leaders or ethnic entrepreneurs having lost their “ancestral custodians of cultural values of gerontocracy and patrimonial community system of dominance and governance” due to their “lukewarm acquiescence” (Orogun: 2009:463) and collusion with oil TNCs, youth restiveness became a legitimate counter force. In their collusion, they seek to create new niches of political space that would enable them to do what Orogun (2009:463) refers to as “capture ‘cash shares’” or “loot ability of crude oil cargos”, or seek for “territorial protection compensation fees from the oil corporations in designated regional enclaves or spheres of clandestine military and commercial operations”.

According to Obi (2006a:17), this explains why “elders prefer dialogue and politico-legal approaches, while youth in the Niger Delta prefer activism, confrontation, and violence”. Although women in the Niger Delta are witness to this complex and illegal oil bunkering or tapping of crude oil by criminal syndicates in a “force majeure” (Orogun: 2009:463), it is difficult for them to participate in this physically masculine, risky and clandestine economy of survival, which Orogun (2009:459) took time to describe:

Due to the multi-layered dimensions of the effects of crude oil, guns, profits, and geo-territorial instability, the protracted problems of the Niger Delta thus, provide us with pertinent analytical and contextual frameworks for the study of the dynamics, volatility and transparency issues in global extractive industries. In the muddled rivers and creeks of the Niger Delta, characterized by regional destabilization, there has emerged a clandestine economy of protection syndicates, marked exponential increase in kidnappings and targeting of expatriate workers, as well as state sponsored military reprisals against self-styled insurgents, warlords, and militia movements.

Oil enclave economies therefore have social and economic downsides that have a direct link with the survival strategies that local communities are likely to adopt. Oil and gas producing countries in the developing world are twice as likely to suffer internal rebellion as a non-oil-producing one. This has been the case from the low-level secessionist struggles in the Niger Delta and southern Thailand, to full-blown civil wars, in Algeria, Colombia, Sudan, and, of course, Iraq (Ross: 2008:2, Oyefusi: 2008).

There are three major reasons why oil enclave economies trigger conflict. The first reason is that by their nature, enclave economies that are characterised with mismanagement are prone to create economic instability and poverty for a majority of the local population (Eifert: et al.: 2003), and this leads to political instability. When local people lose their subsistence means of survival due to displacement by extractive activities, "they become more frustrated with their government and more vulnerable to being recruited by rebel armies that challenge the cash-starved government" (Ross: 2008:2).

In subsistence economies, a sudden drop in income has an immediate impact on survival and livelihood. This is the basis for conflicts and agitations. Link to this is also the economic dynamics of extractive industries. For instance, because oil prices are unusually volatile, oil-producing are subjected cycles of booms and busts. Therefore the more an enclave economy like Nigeria depend on oil revenues, the more she is likely to face turmoil when prices go south.

Second, oil enclave economies are therefore prone to insurgencies because these insurgences also feed on oil wealth as their survival strategies. Oil insurgency can only fizzle out when insurgents run out of funds. But raising money in petroleum-rich countries including Nigeria is relatively easy. Insurgents can steal oil and sell it on the black market, some may be involved in big time oil bunkering and kidnapping of oil workers for ransom. Yet still, others extort money from oil companies working in remote areas. Some could have business partners to fund their insurgent activities in exchange for future consideration in the event they seize power, as the case has been with Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of the Congo (Ross: 2008:3).

The third point is that oil enclave economies are more prone to generate secessionist or separatist movements. This is because oil and gas are usually produced in self-contained economic enclaves that yield a lot of revenue for the central government but provide few jobs for locals -- who also often bear the costs of petroleum development, such as lost property rights and environmental damage. To reverse the imbalance, some locals seek autonomy from the central government, as have the people in the petroleum-rich regions of Bolivia,

Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, and Sudan (Ross: 2008:3). This study is not in any way saying that oil is the only source of such conflicts or that it inevitably breeds violence. In fact, almost half of all the states that have produced oil since 1970 have been conflict-free. It should be observed that oil alone cannot create conflict, but it is the mismanagement of oil wealth that exacerbates latent tensions and gives both the Nigerian government and militant groups the resources and means to fight.

### **3.3 OIL ENCLAVITY AND SEXUAL LIAISONS IN THE NIGER DELTA:**

From the hunting and gathering epoch, the environment has continued to serve as a source for food, shelter and health, and provided the material and spiritual basis for human development and preservation of sociocultural values. Sustainable utilisation of environmental resources ensures the stability of human society. Any form of destruction of the natural habitat, and the ecosystem on which human life depends, is a form of distorted industrialisation with grave consequences. In calculating the derivable revenue gains from the oil and gas industry, the Nigerian environmental as well as its accompanying socioeconomic and other human related costs have been regarded as a price that has been paid (HRW : 1999).

The debate on global warming, green house effect and preservation of bio-diversity needs to be related to the local day-to-day survival and confrontation of indigenous people with the vagaries of nature. Otherwise, it would be considered abstract, luxurious and cynical by indigenous people who depend on what the natural environment can provide (Mkandauire: 1991). With the extractive activities of TNCs, 'local' ecological problems in rural Africa could be sufficiently serious to make daily life and survival a real struggle. While the potential adverse effects of global warming on the African continent cannot be underestimated, this study argues that the global environmental agenda and discourse should be expanded to include local environmental survival challenges confronted by indigenous rural communities. Over exploitation of non-renewable environmental resources can distort the symbiotic equilibrium that exists between the natural environment and human society (Ake: 1997; Kubalkova and Cruickshank: 1981; Meadows: 1992; Nurnberger: 1999; Schumacher: 1974). If this equilibrium is in any way compromised, it leads to the deterioration of the basic survival baseline for those in rural areas.

Relating the foregoing to our study, it means that local inhabitants in OBCs in the Niger Delta would have very little option but to devise personalised individual efforts to survive. Given that it will be cumbersome and complex for this study to measure the various

manifestations of social and economic impact of oil on the entirety of OBCs in a single go, this study decided to zero on the interface of the oil enclave economy and its impact on women, with particular focus on the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate workers.

The phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and better paid expatriate workers is certainly not unique to the Niger Delta or to Nigeria as a country. This has always been the case in enclave economies where there is sharp income disparity between largely local inhabitants whose means of survival is subsistence; and their sexual partners who are a better paid crop of expatriate workers who work with TNCs or International organisations like the United Nations (UN). For instance, disclosure of sexual liaisons between better paid UN staff (peacekeepers or civilian personnel) and local women in mid-2004 prompted UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to appoint Prince Zeid to investigate. Prince Zeid issued the Zeid Report<sup>6</sup>, which among other things provides details of pervasive sexual liaisons between UN staff and local women and girls, involving the exchange of food, jobs, monetary and other material gifts (Defeis: 2008:188).

Bata and Bergesen (2002:7) argue that “the amount of international inequality has vastly outweighed within country inequalities since at least the 1870s when a wave of economic globalization under the *Pax Britannica* increased average wages in the core while leaving most of the periphery and the semi periphery at subsistence levels”. They also contend that the globalisation of inequality “was one of the most important consequences of nineteenth century globalization”, and that “this fact is pregnant with importance for those who seek to understand what the consequences of twentieth century globalization may be”.

The thesis of this study therefore argues that the enclavity of oil economy in the Niger Delta provides a social and economic platform for the phenomenon of sexual liaisons to flourish between local women and expatriate workers. The intersection of oil and sexual liaisons can be understood within two broad ways. The first is at the theoretical level and is in the discourse of the enclave economy hypothesis. Here, theoretical argument holds that the dynamics of the oil enclave economy has indeed altered pre-existing institutional survival structures in the rural agricultural OBCs of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Anikpo: 1996:5).

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<sup>6</sup>See: U.N. General Assembly: A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, U.N. Doc. A/59/710 (Mar. 24, 2005) (*prepared by Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini*) [hereinafter ZEID REPORT].

The second is that oil induced changes in the economy and society of the Niger Delta affect and alter traditional/indigenous occupational practices. Given this situation, local inhabitants in OBCs have to evolve new or non-conventional means of survival. It is within this context that the emergence of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate workers can be located and explained. This study emphasises the point that oil has indeed restructured the socioeconomic dynamics and social relationships amongst people in OBCs of the Niger Delta, leading to the emergence of new socioeconomic structure and class configurations, as well as social exclusion of majority of local inhabitants who are then forced to adopt new ways to survive. This has also led to shifts in cultural values or practices. The phenomena of youth restlessness, militant violence, oil theft and bunkering, kidnapping of oil expatriate workers for ransom, and many other vices in the Niger Delta, are all part of survival strategies, a manifestation of social exclusion of groups and individuals in an enclave oil economy. The phenomenon of sexual liaisons is therefore only one of several survival strategies in the Niger Delta that is adopted by women in OBCs.

Pakulski (2005) describes this scenario as “globalised inequalities...” The theme of his book draws attention to fact that we are living in a world in which inequalities have been globalised beyond national borders because of the world-wide circulation of capital, products, people and ideas. “Globalising Inequalities...” is a book that offers a broad overview of traditional and contemporary theories, current debates and trends in social inequality. It engages inequality on global, national, local and domestic levels, stressing the interdependence between these levels. Drawing on the work of De Tocqueville and others; Pakulski links the analysis of “globalising inequalities” with the history of sociological discussions of inequality. He shows that globalised inequalities are less structured than typical national class hierarchies because they are increasingly hybrid and fluid, associated with issues of democracy, citizenship, elite power, gender gaps and racial divisions.

The relevance of studying globalisation and social exclusion as represented by this study has been acknowledged by Bata and Bergesen (2002:7) when they complained that “global inequality has been little analysed by sociologists despite their claim to be the scientific experts most in charge of the study of human inequalities and social stratification”. Even apologists of globalisation do acknowledge the growing concern of the social and economic implications of economic globalisation on the demise of state public sector and interventions in developing countries (Beall: 2002:71–87).

At this juncture, it is important to explain theoretically how social change, brought about by dynamics of global oil, contributes to the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the

Niger Delta. First of all, we cannot ignore the role of class relations and income disparity in the dynamic interplay between the economy and all other institutions of society. In the case of the Niger Delta, both the negative impact of oil extractive activities on indigenous subsistence economy and the vintage income position of expatriate oil workers are externally induced changes on rural OBCs. The impact of oil induced changes does not always assume a specific direction, uniform posture or the same result on all individuals in OBCs. Anikpo (1996:5) succinctly captures the point thus: “such changes, because they affect the means of production, are mediated largely by policies and decisions of the national ruling class as the policies affect the bargaining power of the rural inhabitants and the operations of the oil company”. The survival strategy that each person would adopt depends on the extent to which effects of oil operations impact on his or her local means of subsistence.

Brownrigg's (1976) study on “*the Impact of Economic Change*” (cited in Anikpo: 1996:5) argues that that the intensity of the impact of a new project on local economy will always depends on two things. The first has to do with the nature of the new project. The second relates to the nature of the local economy in question. Brownrigg's thesis holds that apart from the impact of new projects on local employment, the increases in economic activity associated with new projects could result in either an increase or a decline in local income levels. If new projects lead to an increase in local income levels, they bring prosperity to the local economy and stimulate employment prospects and the construction of new infrastructure. If on the other hand a new project leads to a decline in local income levels, the implications include occupational job losses and unemployment.

It is within this context that one can understand why Ebeku (2006:318, 325) states that the oil “industry is not a separate entity which is somewhere apart generating its own activity... industry is part of the community; it exists for the community and it is the community's right, not just merely privilege, to require from industry what the community wants”. This is also consistent with the basic Marxian dialectical dictum, that changes in the material economic base of any society will always produce corresponding changes in the social system. Rodney (1972:18) argues that “when two societies of different sorts come into prolonged and effective contact, the rate and character of change taking place in both is seriously affected that entirely new patterns are created”. He went further to state that in such circumstances, two general rules apply. The first is that the weaker of the two societies (which in this study is oil bearing communities) is of course “bound to be adversely affected – and the bigger the gap between the two societies concerned, the more detrimental are the consequences” (Rodney: 1972:18).



In the case of the Niger Delta, it is no longer debatable that oil extractive activities have brought about changes in rural communities of oil bearing areas. The concern of this study is the responses by affected communities to such changes. It is important to state responses from oil affected communities have not been monolithic. Rather, response to oil induced changes has come in a variety of ways. Responses to oil induced changes by communities in the Niger Delta can only but reflect the relative weakness of the local (subsistence) economy against oil TNCs in the region (Anikpo: 1996:6).

It is therefore pertinent to argue that between any enclave economic enterprise and the changes it can bring into a local economy (whether positive or negative), is a major mediating factor, which is policy decisions. This partly explains why in different places and times the oil giant Shell has operated, it has produced different results and impacts on local economies. According to Anikpo (1996:8), “what the nature of the local economy actually determines is the length of time which it takes the community to decay or develop. That is the rate of atrophy or the rate of progress, and not the nature of the change in terms of positive or negative”.

In the case of Nigeria, our review of Shell's corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy decisions in chapter five shows the lack of commitment to address the fundamentals of community development. In addition, even the stand by elites from the Niger Delta against national discriminatory oil revenue formula which does not favour the region, is about state class relations and is one and the same thing. This is because oil related policies have not practically addressed fundamental challenges and needs of OBCs. What they both have in common are “superfluous policy decisions that deprived rural peasants of the full benefits of oil production despite the fact that they absorb directly the entire negative impacts of the enterprise” (Anikpo (1996:8). This situation only creates an atmosphere as a guarantee for oil exploration.

In the case of the Niger Delta, oil extractive activities including the construction of rigs, industrial facilities, power plants, and the process of prospecting, exploring and drilling crude mineral oil result in the degradation and destruction of life-supporting ecological systems and natural resources, which constitute the main source of subsistence survival for majority of the inhabitants in the Niger Delta. Other associated social problems include threats to human health, and shifts in indigenous sociocultural values. These social and economic effects which are the focus of this study vary in both magnitude and dimension depending on the exposure of local economy to the ramifications of the oil economy. In some cases the social effects of

oil may be for a short or medium term, in others the effects “may end as irreversible damage” (Asakitikpi and Oyelaran: 2000:173).

Sociocultural effects of oil extractive activities can be a result of many factors which may include inadequate attention paid at the planning and designing stages, lack of adequate knowledge, information and, or the will necessary to predict or prevent their occurrence. In addition, it has been argued by Asakitikpi and Oyelaran (2000:173) that in some circumstances even when such knowledge and information are made available, “they are most often disregarded and not acted upon”. They opined that instances also exist “when undesirable effects” from oil extractive activities “are foreseen and acknowledged, planners may not be aware of cost-effective or mitigation measures or may not have considered alternative project designs or locations”.

Environmental degradation issues are therefore not only of topical concern to OBCs in the Niger Delta, but a major cause of losses in subsistence occupations and productivity of local economies. The World Bank (WB) seems to dispute this and instead blame other factors, such as poverty and population growth, to be the major causes of environmental degradation in the region. For instance, WB rejects the contention that loss of subsistence occupation has any direct cause and effect relationship with declines in fisheries and agricultural productivity. Rather, WB blames factors such as population increases, migration and the construction of upstream dams to be the more significant causes of the loss of subsistence occupations and productivity declines in OBCs (World Bank: 1995:117).

It is no longer a debate that oil pollution contributes to loss of subsistence occupations, unemployment and poverty in the Niger Delta (Aaron, 2006:197; Ibeanu: 2002a, b; Okoko: 1999). But the problem that this study investigates goes beyond the losses of subsistence occupations. Our focus here is on the attendant social and economic consequences of the loss of occupations or declining local economies on the survival of OBCs. While the popular discourse highlights unemployment and poverty as a generic problem in the Niger Delta, significant attention now needs to shift to the social and economic impact of the loss of subsistence occupations in terms of the types of survival measures put in place by people to cope and how survival strategies also impact back on individuals as well as the larger economy and society of OBCs.

By way of clarification, while oil pollution of the natural environment has ripple effects on human ecology and leads to loss of subsistence occupation, the focus in this study is on implications of the ramifications of survival strategies adopted by individuals or groups on the social, economic and cultural lives of OBCs. This is what Chokor (2000:62) refers to as

the effects of oil on “the spirituality and quality of social existence” in the Niger Delta. It is important to note that the oil industry does not only contribute to improve revenue generation for the Nigerian government and affect the socioeconomic life of OBCs, but it also impacts on cultural attachment to place, social meanings of the natural environment and societal values. Like any natural resource, oil fields are not just natural entities but part and parcel of a complex interaction with socioeconomic as well as sociocultural and spiritual landscapes of human society.

This explains why one of the major expressions of impact of the enclavity of oil extractive activities on OBCs in the Niger Delta comes in the way of influx of different categories of people into the area of project operations whether on-shore or off-shore. Such migrants into the Niger Delta include those within the region itself; those from outside it, and expatriates from other countries and regions of the world. Therefore the first social problem is an increase in population that the local people were not accustomed to. Mass movement of people from within and outside Nigeria into the Niger Delta region is potentially a major social upheaval and health risk. Generally speaking, increase in human population puts pressure on available natural resources (Mabogunje: 1996:8–9) and can bring about problems of overcrowding and spread of communicable diseases (Anikpo: 1996:23; Ogwumike and Ozughalu: 2001:4).

Asakitikpi and Oyelaran (2000) argue that the particular problem in the Niger Delta, which has to do with scandalous promiscuous living between oil company men and under age indigenous women, including even school girls, became a problem to OBCs. This aspect of alternative forms of social and economic survival is at the core of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate workers. This is the way Asakitikpi and Oyelaran (2000:180) succinctly acknowledge and describe the problem of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta:

...the emergence of squatter settlements, pressure on existing social amenities, introduction of new life style, increase in drug use, and the overall disruption of social order. Teenage girls who were not exposed to the unfolding life-style are lured into pre-marital sex resulting in the increase in...unwanted pregnancies. Such pregnancies, usually owned by non-natives and expatriates end up producing “fatherless” children thereby upsetting traditional family structure.

(Asakitikpi and Oyelaran: 2000:180)

Besides the influx of immigrants, the enclave nature of oil extractive activities by oil TNCs also creates social stratification in OBCs. Again the context has been succinctly captured thus:

The oil workers live in comparative luxury, leisure, and affluence with the provision of electricity, potable drinking water and communication facilities in well laid out estates or site camps. In contrast, natives of the host communities remain in conditions that are strikingly deplorable. This inequality in settlement pattern and life style is usually a source of constant tension. This charged atmosphere and the resultant resentment of the original inhabitants usually lead to the aggressive attack on oil companies' workers.

(Asakitikpi and Oyelaran: 2000:180)

Hassan (et al.: 2002:13) argues that fishing is the predominant activity in the coastal areas with men concentrating on the capture and females engaging in the processing of the fish. But the activities of the oil companies have seriously affected local livelihoods due to water pollution, take-over of fishing grounds by equipment and installation and damage to fishing nets. According to Hassan et al.'s (2002) findings, the alternative means of livelihood is that "men are now forced to go farther out to sea for fishing which is more time-consuming and dangerous". According to them, "women can no longer easily harvest smaller fish and marine products in the nearby streams and swamps". Consequently, fish processing as a source of indigenous occupation for women has become "less prevalent" and "livelihoods are threatened due to the impact of the oil companies' activities".

It is within the foregoing context that the strategic impact of oil extractive activities on the social and economic life of OBCs can be understood. It also explains why Asakitikpi and Oyelaran (2000:181) argue that the situation is "aggravated due to mass unemployment in the community resulting from the destruction of major sources of livelihood (mainly fishing and farming) by pollution as result of oil extraction activities". Between 1976 and 1991, the Niger Delta is estimated to have witnessed 2,976 oil spills (Asakitikpi and Oyelaran: 2000:181). The impact is also strategic because it is felt at the social, economic, occupational, cultural and family sub-systems, and the day-to-day living conditions of those affected. It is also strategic because of the capacity of oil enclaves to alter, impair or change the survival rhythm of these communities.

Alteration or change in livelihood connotes three broad meanings. Firstly it means that individuals or groups in OBCs are forced by the reality of oil and gas extractive activities to abandon their normal way of life. Secondly, alteration or change in livelihood means that new

forms of survival or livelihood would have to be adopted. It is within the above context that we can understand the submission by Hassan's (et al.: 2002:13) findings thus:

One of the coping mechanisms used by the local population, which is common in rural areas generally, is to engage in multiple income-generating activities. These activities are, for the most part, small-scale and seasonal. The options, however, are limited. One constraint for males in fishing communities is related to the need to go further out to the high seas to get a good catch. Without a good boat equipped with an engine, this becomes impossible for many men who become hired labourers to better-off fishermen.

Hassan (et al.: 2002:17) further explains that the effects of oil activities "upon the availability of fish products" is so serious that one of her male interviewees attests that "they used to get a large catch of fish from the high seas", but "now they can spend up to three days on the sea and come back with a dismal catch". A female interviewee submits:

In times past women used to fish just around the beach and swamps. Women then used ekene (net with small holes) to catch small fish, crayfish and other marine products by the beach. Periwinkles, which women used to derive good income from, are not easily available. We have to go very far to get periwinkles now. Frogs that used to live under mangroves are no more. Crabs are no more. Fish products are now measure by scale. This was not the case before. Fish is now very expensive that Mobil workers are ready to pay.

(Hassan: et al.: 2002:17)

Besides loss of employment opportunity due to the impact of oil activities on local subsistence fishing in the Niger Delta, Hassan (et al.: 2002:14) also found that there was a record "increase demand for sex by oil workers". This according to them has made sexual liaison the most attractive alternative means of survival amongst women who used to trade in fish. The lament is that surplus money in the hands of oil workers has become "a serious temptation" not only to mature women "but also local young girls as well" (Hassan: et al.: 2002:18) who are forced to abandon their normal subsistence occupations of fishing, farming and petty trading.

The fundamental question that needs to be asked is: what does the impact of the losses in subsistence occupation have on OBCs? This question needs to be answered because according to Opukri and Ibaba (2008:174), "the literature on the Niger Delta highlights poverty, unemployment, underemployment, proletarianisation, and rural-urban migration as the consequences." The same literature has not adequately addressed other intervening social and economic outcomes that result from loss of subsistence occupations arising from oil

based environmental degradation. In other words, how do people in OBCs who have lost their subsistence occupations survive? This study seeks to fill this gap by attempting to provide answers to this question.

My argument is that oil mineral induced environmental degradation and other effects do not only have the potential of loss of subsistence occupations, creation of unemployment and exacerbation of the poverty situation amongst OBCs, but they also drive people to adopt various forms of survival strategies that in turn impact negatively on both individuals and society. In other words, Opukri and Ibaba (2008:174) also argue that the collapse of local economies, induced by oil spillages, gas flaring, and other extractive activities of the oil industry, dislocate and displace people from their hitherto subsistence means of survival or occupations, "without providing viable alternatives". The interconnectedness of the survival strategies adopted by OBCs with the oil enclave economy of the Niger Delta is either ignored or treated as tangential. The study therefore seeks to investigate the linkage between the enclavite oil economy and survival strategies adopted by OBCs. Our specific focus is on how the pressures of survival do encourage voluntary sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers.

An important sociological point that can be made here is the fact that the abandonment of normal subsistence way of life could also mean abandoning hitherto socially acceptable ways of livelihood. This partly explains why women and school girls would engage in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers against the societal values system and expected ways of making a living. The issue here is that, while sexual liaison as an alternative way of livelihood runs contrary to hitherto established family and community ways of doing things, societal values and cultural practices, local women and girls nevertheless have no alternative but to adopt it as a means for personal or individual survival because of failure of the normative means of survival to provide them with opportunities.

In sociological theory, what we have here in the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers is about system change or social change occasioned by the ramifications of oil extractive activities. This is because the social and economic factors that contribute to the emergence of sexual liaisons as a survival strategy by women represent a disruption of societal collective order and sociocultural system. This is indeed a reflection of oil enclave system dynamics. In theoretical parlance, sexual liaison is therefore about system change that stems from the socioeconomics of the oil enclave system of the Niger Delta. Sexual liaison is therefore internal change that results from what can be regarded as a 'malfunctioning' of the social system. As we have identified above, this

malfunction stems from a number of causes. In Merton's (1957) theoretical elucidation, among these causes is the conflict between cultural goals and institutional norms, both of which can be seen as either two of many elements or two analytical phases of social and cultural structure.

According to Merton (1957), cultural goals are a frame as well as reference of aspirations which are defined firstly by social and cultural structure. Then institutional norms develop as a result of the same structure to regulate and control the acceptable modes of achieving these goals. The system is said to be in order or equilibrium as long as these two entities are in agreement. Anomie or disorder arises when cultural goals and acceptable means defined by institutional norms come into conflict. Anomie generated by the conflict in social and cultural structure has an impact on individuals in that it constitutes the structural basis for different sorts of deviant behaviour. Implied in Merton's argument is that once accumulated, anomie can move a society toward change via "deviant agents."

In chapters four and five of *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Merton (1957:131–194) clearly treated this scenario in his theory of *social structure and anomie*. Merton postulates that there is a close resemblance between the normative system, the social structure and actual behaviour. He demonstrated that the existence of discrepancy between cultural values and social structure can generate behavioural responses which depart significantly from culturally defined expectations. Merton holds that in all societies, there are institutionalised means of reaching culturally defined goals. However, because members of society are placed in different socioeconomic positions in the social structure, they do not have the same opportunity of realising the shared values. For such there is a tendency for some people to reject societal values and procedure and to strive for success by any available means.

This situation is unique to members of the lower socioeconomic strata who are most likely not to succeed through normative means of achieving success. With low educational qualifications, low real income, and unemployment or under employment providing little opportunity for social and economic advancement, Merton noted that there is greater pressure upon this social category to adapt any of the following unconventional means which promises greater rewards. Firstly, since the way to success is structurally blocked, they innovate. Secondly, others may scale down or abandon their success goals and give up striving for success. Thirdly, some may revolt against the entire structure of society. Fourthly, others may endorse the situation by becoming solitary or keeping to themselves.

Special emphasis is made on theories of adaptation to social and economic dislocations. Merton's (1957:132–139) “patterns of cultural goals and institutional norms”, otherwise known as modes of adaptation (means-ends scheme), provide us with the theoretical thrust to understand and explain why women and girls in OBCs have had to adopt sexual liaison with expatriate oil workers as a survival measure. Merton identifies five modes of adaptation by individuals within the society over which conflict between cultural goals and institutional norms reigns. These are: Conformity: the acceptance of both cultural goals and acceptable means defined by institutional norms. The second is Innovation: the acceptance of cultural goals, but such goals are attained by the use of means disapproved by institutional norms. The third is Ritualism: the excessive conformity to legitimate means combined with ignorance of the cultural goals which such means are to serve. The fourth is Retreatism: the passivity to both cultural goals and means approved by institutional norms. This may sometimes involve the withdrawal from the system. The fifth is Rebellion: In this case, both the cultural goals and institutionally approved means of achieving them are rejected. Instead, attempts are made to establish new goals and means in place of the old ones (Merton: 1957:139–157).

Such changes to the conventional way of survival also have the tendency to contribute in re-structuring social relations among and between individuals, between gender categories, within and between family members, and within and between groups or communities in the Niger Delta. The effects of oil pollution on sources of livelihood combined with the problem of non-employment of majority of the youths due to lack of relevant skills and qualifications compel OBCs to become what Asakitikpi and Oyelaran (2000:181) refer to as “areas of intense hatred and bitterness”.

It is important to observe that the foregoing paints a picture that the type of livelihood which men and women in OBCs derive and the incentive they have for managing environmental resources have over the years been mediated not only by social institutions (in terms of social rules of tenure, property rights), but by extractive activities of oil TNCs. We need to therefore clarify here that the livelihood which directly depends on what the natural environment can provide is different from formal employment. Formal employment is a specific piece of work or activity performed in exchange for payment. As such, while we work to earn income or money, we engage in a livelihood to support life in a subsistence way. As such livelihood may or may not involve money (Hassan: et al.: 2002:8). Olujide's (2000) study, on how individual household or groups make their living, found that livelihood revolves around the activities people undertake to meet basic needs. His concept of livelihood



therefore encompasses not only the availability of the means to make a living but also the ability of the sources of livelihood to continue to support human lives. The next section reviews the history of sexual liaisons in colonial enclaves.

### **3.4 SEXUAL LIAISON: LESSONS FROM COLONIAL ENCLAVES**

The Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe.

(Said: 2003:190)

Under colonial rule and in the process of exploiting minerals, expatriate officers in colonies and some of the migrant workers did not always come with their female partners. In most colonial enclaves, there were initial restrictions on the emigration of European women. In some instances, European men were convicted by colonial courts for engaging in sexual liaisons with 'native' women. According to Walther (2008:19), the end of the nineteenth century was a period in which colonial authorities began active "control over European bodies, especially with whom they slept". The most aggressive actions took place in Southwest Africa (modern Namibia), where colonial officials and their supporters went to great extremes to exclude from any positions of social or political power those who married or cohabited with indigenous women. Marriages between native women and Europeans were banned. Those convicted for such offences were deported back to Germany. Similar experiences and challenges were reported in South East Asia and elsewhere in the colonised world.

A range of conscious efforts to restrict emigration of European women into colonies includes forbidden entry and expedited repatriation. In the case of Nigeria, Callaway (1987:9) argues that "the colonial service in Nigeria considered itself to be a men's institution, doing a job requiring 'masculine' capacities. Women were perceived as an addition – in some ways helpful, perhaps an unnecessary luxury and distraction, often a burden, possibly a danger". Stoler (1989a:139) submit that there was "over-whelming uniformity with which white women were barred from early colonial enterprises". Stoler (1989b:637) acknowledges that as far back as 1622, the Dutch East India Company or Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) consciously restricted immigration of European women to the East Indies. The restriction was enforced in two ways. The first was by way of conscious selection of bachelors as their European recruits. The second was that the VOC legally and financially

made concubinage the most attractive domestic option for its employees (Blusse 1986:173; Ming 1983:69; Taylor: 1983:12–16).

With restrictions on European women, the rank and file of colonial male officers began to conscript local women as concubines. Concubinage sexual liaison differed from colony to colony and from one colonial empire to another: it was practised in a wide range of ways (Stoler: 1989b:637). What is clear though is that the practice did not emerge out of a vacuum. Rather, it was first and foremost a form of liaison that served the sexual needs of the colonisers who did not come with their female partners.

By the time a notable rise in interracial sexual liaisons between European male and native women led to astronomical increase in the population of offspring or ‘fatherless’ children (Walther: 2002:34–44, Wildenthal: 1997, 1998), colonial authorities became frightened and began to put in place policies to stem the tide (Bear: 1994). Response by colonial powers to the problem of sexual liaisons was not uniform. With specific reference to Germany, citizenship was defined in racial, class, gender, and sexual terms. This meant no sexual relationship across the racial barrier. Within such a context, sex became racially categorised and a defining feature of ‘German civilization’ (Walther: 2008:12).

Cooper and Stoler (1989:14) argue that “imperial thinkers thought out the relationship between subversion and sex”. Conscious efforts were put in place as authorities tried to control, scrutinised, imagined and even “fantasized about what people did at night” because sex was considered as a possible basis on which “colonial authority might be secured or irreparably undermined”. Sexual liaison became immersed in economics as in the political calculations of colonial empires. Cooper and Stoler (1989:14) posit that “family ideology and political agendas” were intertwined to the extent that colonial reactions against local protests in the early 1930s on Sumatra's estates were countered by selective dismissal of its bachelor population. In their place, the colonial authorities began to encourage *gezin-vorming* or family formation. Cooper and Stoler also reported that both the British and French in Africa responded to a “wave of protest in cities and mine towns”, by stabilising the “family life of wage labourers as a solution to urban disorder”.

From the beginning therefore, colonial authorities had zero tolerance to any form of sexual liaison between Europeans and natives (Aldrich: 2003:129; Bleys: 1995:145–156; Hyam: 1990; Mosse: 1985; Snitow: et al.: 1983; Stoler: 1997). Conscious measures were however put in place to curtail and control inter-racial sexual liaisons (Gann and Duignan: 1977:73, 67–68; Walther: 2002:37–39). The German empire's ‘race mixing’ policy emphasised a fundamental ban on ‘mixed marriage’ and could not give a clear position on the

status of what it regarded as “illegitimate mixed-descent children” (Wildenthal: 2001:129) . In 1914 a two-way strategic policy was put in place to curb ‘race mixing’. First, the rights of African women and their Pacific Islander counterparts were either restricted or absolutely denied (Wildenthal: 2001:129). The ill treatment and in some cases sexual abuse of African women by colonial agents resonate with the ongoing legacy of abandoning ‘fatherless’ children born out of sexual liaison between expatriate oil company workers and local women in contemporary Niger Delta today. They also resonate with Edward Said’s thesis that developing economies and societies are sites where people from the global North “look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe” (Said: 2003:190).

In the colonial enclaves of Togo and German New Guinea, sexual liaison between European men and native women was so entrenched that Governor Hahl of New Guinea himself had two native ‘wives’. One of the factors that can best explain this was that “there were more European males than females” (Walther: 2004:9). Children from such liaisons were however denied German citizenship (Walther: 2002:34–44; 2004:7–11), even though German domestic law would have recognised them as such (Wildenthal: 1997:267–77, Walther: 2002:34–44). The social and economic challenge faced by such ‘fatherless’ children is discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Official endorsement of concubinage practice energised the colonial project in two broad ways. First, it helped colonial authorities to control and restrict the flow of European women into colonies. Secondly, it eased the tight checks on sexual liaisons between European men and native women. Stoler (1989b:637) describes it in the following way:

Referred to as *nyai* in Java and Sumatra, *congai* in Indochina, and *petite epouse* throughout the French empire, the colonized woman living as a concubine to a European man formed the dominant domestic arrangement in colonial cultures through the early 20th century. Unlike prostitution, which could and often did result in a population of syphilitic and therefore non-productive European men, concubinage was considered to have a stabilizing effect on political order and colonial health—a relationship that kept men in their barracks and bungalows, out of brothels and less inclined to perverse liaisons with one another.

Besides the provision of sexual and other emotional services to colonial officials, concubines also had other social and economic importance to empire. From the nineteenth to the early part of the twentieth centuries, concubinage did not only profit the VOC and other colonial empires, but was also an economic relief to low income European workers in colonies. Stoler (1989b:637) notes that within this period “salaries of European recruits to the

colonial armies, bureaucracies, plantation companies and trading enterprises were kept artificially low because local women provided domestic services for which new European recruits would otherwise have had to pay". She continued that in the mid-1800s, such arrangements were made "for young civil servants intent on setting up households on their own". It is therefore not a surprise that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, concubinage became an acceptable and conventional living arrangement for European colonials in the Indies and elsewhere (Cohen 1971:122; Ming 1983:70; Taylor 1983:16).

In colonial Asia, Africa, South America, the West Indies and elsewhere, colonial authorities at some point in time encouraged and actively supported the need to patronise sexual relationship with local or native women. Besides sexual relationships, local women were useful guides towards decoding local language(s) and other possible indigenous mysteries found in colonies (Cohen 1971:122). Earlier, it was noted that Spear (2003:76–77, 98) and Stoler (1992) interrogate a similar sexual liaison concubinage practice known as *métissage* (interracial unions). This was a form of concubinage practice in which an American Indian or African American woman engages in sexual liaison with Euro-American men. It was known in Amerindian as '*placage*'. *Métissage* did not challenge French attempts to build alliances or to exploit Amerindian land; and other natural resources. Rather, *métissage* indeed, aided the process, and continued to be accepted as informally concubinage practice in especially in Upper Louisiana, where Amerindian trade remained the mainstay of the regional economy at the time.

In South East Asia, colonial authorities embarked on campaigns, production and circulation of handbooks that encouraged and urged non European men bound for plantations and colonies such as Tonkin, Sumatra and Malaya to take advantage of and participate in the concubinage sexual liaison system. The practice of concubinage was encouraged because it eased and facilitated quick acclimatisation of European officials and non European migrant plantation workers. Butcher (1979:200, 202) and Hesselink (1987:208) hold that concubinage insulates men from the ill-health associated with sexual abstention, isolation and boredom. In Colonial India, ordinary European males including those in low ranked colonial civil service, ordinary soldiers, small merchants, and artisans had little or no option but to engage in sexual liaisons, concubinage or some form of union with less well-to-do Indian women. This trend continued into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Official policies put in place by British colonial authorities to discourage inter-racial sexual liaisons and, or 'mixed marriages' did not therefore succeed. Such unions continued to occur alongside the practice of concubinage (Hyam: 1986a; Stoler 1995:59).

In colonial Nigeria, sexual liaison between native women and European males was not very common. What existed then were rare cases in which native women were kept as concubines by colonial officers. Callaway (1987:48) captures the way it was practised in the following way:

When Stanhope White arrived in Maiduguri (Nigeria) in 1936, the Resident's interpreter said to him, 'if the Master of the House wishes to have a Fulani or Shuwa virgin, it can be arranged'...The interpreter went on to expound the local attitude, that this was a man's world, that all men were the same at heart and it was natural to want a woman, particularly a virgin; some white men had nothing to do with women except their wives, but others took concubines.

(Callaway 1987:48)

White (1966:11) states that few "mixed race" children were born from such concubinage sexual liaisons. There has therefore been considerable debate on why concubinage or sexual liaisons between Europeans and Nigerian women did not lead to a substantial population of mixed race offspring as was the case in other colonised territories. The first factor that can be thrown to the fore may have to do with the nature of Nigerian colonisation. As an 'Indirect Ruled' (Yahaya: 1980) and a non settler colony, sexual liaison between 'native' women and European men was not practised on a large scale. Sexual liaisons became a problem in the post-colonial era when oil became the main stay of Nigeria's economy and attracted streams of expatriate workers into the Delta region.

Colonial Nigeria was against any form of sexual liaison between Europeans and native women. This policy was dictated by factors which included the drive to prevent the growth of an "undesirable class of unattached females" (Lovejoy: 1988:249). By the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, concerted efforts were made by both the British and Dutch colonial governments to officially ban concubinage, or "sex and marriage across racial boundaries" (Callaway: 1987:48). Heuer (2000:195) argues that "at various points during the twentieth century, colonial states imposed restrictions on interracial marriage and concubinage as part of a hardening of social boundaries between the sexes and races". The British Colonial Secretary issued a confidential circular otherwise known as the 'concubinage circular' in 1909. It was distributed throughout British colonial territories.

The circular disapproved of colonial "officers becoming involved with local women and setting out penalties" (Callaway 1987:48). The circular was introduced when the sexual exploits of a British officer in Kenya were brought to the notice of colonial authorities. It led to a fierce debate in the British parliament. The circular went to great length to lament that

“such ill conduct between government officials and native women has caused serious trouble among native populations” and that such practice lowers the status and prestige of Europeans “in the eyes of the natives” (Callaway 1987:48). The strong language of the circular and the threats contained in it did not in anyway stop concubinage practice.

Several reasons explain why the circular failed to erase concubinage practice. In the first place, measures put in place by the British and Dutch were selectively enforced. Secondly, besides her policy of assimilation (Berghe: 1963; Clancy-Smith and Gouda: 1998; Heuer: 2000; Johnson: 2004; Jones: 1980; Lewis: 1962:137–139), France which was a close rival to the British Empire chose this very time to adopt “exactly opposite policy by encouraging their officers to take local mistresses” (Callaway 1987:48–49; Hyam: 1986b:73).

In the case of Nigeria, when Lugard became a Governor-General of an amalgamated Nigeria in 1914, he issued a circular along the tune of the ‘concubinage circular’ (Callaway 1987:49; Muffet: 1978:17, 23). Despite the challenges that accompanied the practice of concubinage, it was tacitly condoned for a long time. Hyam (1986a) and Callaway (1987:49) argued that British officers in Nigeria and elsewhere were aware of official disapproval of their consorting sexual liaisons with African women, yet the practice was condoned.

Writing on concubinage practice in South Western Nigeria, Atkinson (1939:59) quoted in Callaway (1987:49) states that “there was a tendency to be boastful and exhibitionistic about one’s drinking prowess. In the matter of sexual relationships, most expatriates were totally reticent”. Callaway (1987:49) elaborates at length and provides clarity on Atkinson’s statement. She states that Atkinson “assumes that with so few white women and so few social outlets, it would have been surprising if a fair proportion of white officials and traders did not seek solace regularly or occasionally from black women”. Atkinson then “proposes to honour their reticence”. Callaway also observes that other colonial officers follow Atkinson’s pattern of temperament and are disinclined to talk about ongoing sexual exploits in their memoirs. Callaway concludes that the ‘concubinage circular’ could not be fully implemented because; some bachelor British officers had local women who lived with them.

In the late 19th century, the opening of Sumatra's plantation belt witnessed a blossoming of concubinage practices. In *A Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt*, Stoler (1985:31–34) observes that through the 1920s concubinage between Javanese and Japanese *huishoudsters* (householders) was the rule rather than the exception. It is against the forgoing background that the previous section examined the manifestations of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the oil enclave economy of Nigeria’s Niger Delta.

### **3.5 SEXUAL LIAISONS AND 'FATHERLESS' CHILDREN IN THE NIGER DELTA: AN EXERCISE IN THE THEORY OF FATHERHOOD:**

Few issues in the 1990s generate such heat as the question of fatherlessness. While public attention in the past decade has focused relentlessly on single motherhood, the social and political lens has now begun to shift to the place of *father* in the lives and homes of women and children... Are there, in fact, more children living without fathers today? Do children need fathers? Is there a relation between fatherlessness and rising rates of crime and destitution, or does father talk serve as mere subterfuge for more fundamental discussions of poverty and inequality? What, after all, *is* a father? It is not at all clear whether we should grieve the loss or celebrate the transformation of contemporary fatherhood...*What is fatherlessness?...Does fatherlessness matter?* What are the consequences, for men, women, children, and society as a whole, of father absence? *What is a father?* Can mothers, partners, brothers, uncles, adoptive fathers, or stepfathers fulfil the same functions as biological dads? The answers to these related questions hold profound implications for public culture, policy and law.

(Daniels: 2000b:1–2)

The previous sections show that given the mobile nature of oil company expatriate workers, they come into the Niger Delta region without their families. They enter into relatively unstable sexual liaisons with 'native' women. Some of these relationships produce children who are in most cases abandoned when the fathers fly back to their home countries in Europe at the end of their contract with oil TNCs. This is one of the challenges that local communities in the oil enclaves of Nigeria's Niger Delta have had to live with. It is against the forgoing background that the intersection of enclave economies and phenomenon of 'fatherless children' can be understood.

The phenomenon of 'fatherless' children, who are products of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta, is also part of the social dimensions of oil enclivity. With little or no access to basic means of survival in terms of employment opportunities, abandoned women with 'fatherless' children are likely to pass on the social and economic challenges they are confronted with to their children. The foregoing sections of this chapter have shown that the alternative survival strategy adopted by local women in the Niger Delta has been to engage in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil company male workers. We also observe in this chapter that globalisation has meant the deterioration of the living conditions of women in enclave economies. This dimension has further re-awakened an old debate began by Engels (1985:58–115) and now provoked by (Daniels: 2000b:2) on whether there is a dialectical relationship between family structure, private property and poverty (Engels: 1985:83–89).

The primary responsibility for socialization in the Niger Delta devolves on the family system. But the family system in most enclave economies in Sub-Saharan African countries has been subjected to severe social and economic and cultural assaults by both the colonial and post-colonial global capitalist projects such as Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and neo-liberal policies of privatisation as discussed in chapters one, two and three. The effects have been demonstrated forcefully in the break down of the survival safety nets, and the impact has largely been felt on the family system in the form of break down in marriages, divorce and an increasing number of children being raised in single-parent families or by substitute caretakers rather than parents.

In the Niger Delta, the social and economic consequences of oil enclave economy have been epitomised by the abandonment of local women and their bi-racial 'fatherless' children by their expatriate male sexual 'partners'. Abandonment also creates all forms of social, cultural and economic effects. Some of the social effects include the emergence of single mothers having to cater for bi-racial 'fatherless' children. Other implications for immediate family and communities include disruptions of the traditional family system and cultural values. As for the effects on the oil industry, narrative by our field research participants in part two of this study suggests that some of the frustrated 'fatherless' children constitute recruiting grounds for would be oil insurgents or militants.

Our qualitative field research data also suggest that bi-racial 'fatherless' children in single-mother families or caretaker settings are at great risk of been subjected to social and economic deprivation. Their background also affects their growth and personality development in several ways. Generally, the absence of a primary socialising agent, most often father, has always had direct effects on both childhood and adulthood of children (Daniels: 2000a).

In the case of the Niger Delta, the absence of expatriate fathers undermines the role that a father is expected to play as a mediator and provider of security and a guide against negative influences. An important finding of this study is that the emotionally and economically strained and often socially isolated and abandoned conditions of mothers has over the years had both direct and indirect effects on 'fatherless' children in the Niger Delta. It is within the context of the foregoing that we can understand why there is the tendency for 'fatherless' children to become aggressive against oil TNCs in the Niger Delta. Given the social and economic constraints faced by abandoned offspring of sexual liaisons, it is logical that such children are likely to be aggressive against the oil industry and all that it represents in the Niger Delta.



It is therefore important that we take a brief theoretical review of Father and Child development. The role and responsibility of fatherhood has come under intense scrutiny by the media, politicians and the world of social research. The collection of nine articles in the volume *Lost Fathers: The Politics of Fatherlessness in America* edited by Cynthia R. Daniels (2000a) addresses these issues in a multifaceted debate on the social implications of the absence of father in the life of children. This volume not only interrogates the role of fathers in families, but also takes a critical review of the effects of fatherlessness on families from varying perspectives. Daniels's (2000a) edited articles ask and attempt to answer the following questions: Do children need fathers? Do mothers need husbands? Should we celebrate or grieve the loss or transformation of fatherhood? The scholarly articles in this volume subject the concept of "fatherlessness" to diverse theoretical paradigms from conservative to radical feminist perspectives on the subject matter of absent fathers.

Western debate on fatherhood swings between two broad approaches. First are those conservative views that conceptualise marriage and fatherhood as essential social ingredients for family stability, and protection of mothers and children. This approach also underpins Western liberal democratic culture and societal values. Second is the Western feminist perception of marriage as a patriarchal institution fashioned against women. This approach perceives gender differences as oppressive social constructs and tools against women. Western feminists' alternative view holds that family life should not only be reconstituted around egalitarianism and androgyny, but that measures should be put in place to diminish the dominant role of fatherhood. Theoretical debate on fatherhood and fatherlessness therefore emerged in Western world when social science and other related disciplines began to interrogate issues dealing with child welfare, poverty, sexuality, divorce, and feminist challenge to traditional patriarchal family structures and values, as well as 'racial disorder' (Daniels: 2000b:1).

The role of the father in child development has been a subject of considerable theoretical debate. The debate revolves around issues which include the importance of father-child interaction to the moral, intellectual and personality development of a child. Other theoretical issues also include the socioeconomic challenges faced by children who grow up without a father. In most societies, there are roles played by sociocultural practices to define the father-child relationship. It is within those cultural specificities within family and community that child rights and obligations are defined. This chapter therefore provides a theoretical review and understanding of the importance of father to the socialisation and development of a child.

Lamb (1976a:1) argues that “both laymen and academics have shown increasing interest in the role of the father in child development” for three broad reasons.

Firstly, theoretical debate over child development has been dominated by what Lamb regards as “traditional cultural emphases” which dwell heavily on the “the role of the mother in the socialization of the child”. Lamb feels strongly that the focus has been on the mother-child relationship, and that this is a skewed and an unbalanced approach which does not allow for a deep understanding of the challenges that ‘fatherless’ children usually encounter in the process of their development into adulthood.

Lamb (1976a:29) argues that “there is a peculiar tendency to infer sequentially that, mothers are primary caretakers, they are more important than fathers, and that they alone deserve investigation”. While this may be the case in the West, the reality in the oil enclave economy in the Niger Delta is not only different, but it should be noted that the oil industry is structurally designed and run in a patriarchal fashion. The challenges facing bi-racial ‘fatherless’ child in the oil enclave economy of the Niger Delta are therefore two fold.

The second reason is that “the ascendant interest in fathers and other family members relates to the disintegration of the family in contemporary... society” (Lamb 1976a:1). Lamb also states that “the ecology in which children are raised” has continuously “been altered in recent years”, and that “the rapidity and extensiveness of these changes have forced social scientists” to take considerable interest on the manifestation and impact of such changes on the livelihood of ‘fatherless’ children (Lamb: 1976a:2). His concerns hinge on the argument that we know “little about the nature or the importance of father-child relationship”, which is indeed one of the “most frequently disrupted” relationships in human society (Lamb: 1976a:2).

Like Lamb (1976a:x), this chapter shifts the debate to “redress the imbalanced focus on the mother’s influence that has characterized much previous theorizing and research, by demonstrating that fathers, like mothers, have both direct and indirect influences” on the development of a child. Second, the chapter presents research participants’ narratives on the tendency of ‘fatherless’ children (products of sexual liaisons between local Niger Delta women and expatriate oil workers) to participate in oil insurgency activities. The chapter also presents research participants’ narratives on the intersection of sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers and the challenges faced by abandoned or ‘fatherless’ children in the Niger Delta.

Thirdly, it is my hope that conclusions drawn from participants’ evidence on the intersection of ‘fatherlessness’ of children resulting from oil induced sexual liaisons and the tendency of such children to engage in insurgency activities in the Niger Delta, will indeed

provoke interest and more research specifically directed at this vastly under-researched and poorly explored dimension of the Niger Delta crisis. Our analysis of the linkages between fatherlessness created by oil induced sexual liaison practices and the tendency to engage in oil insurgency, does not in any way imply that fathers are the most important influence on child development.

Such an absolute claim would not only be absurd, but would be tantamount to ignoring the sociological fact that both mother and father play complementary roles in the development of a child. Our objective here is simply to draw attention to the fact that like mothers, fathers also affect the development of their children. This is a sociological fact that has been ignored too often in both the theoretical and conceptual analysis of the deepening violence crisis and general insecurity in the Niger Delta region. It is therefore hoped that the presentation of participants' narrative in this chapter would stimulate research interests into the intersection of fatherlessness of children born out of sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers and the tendency of such children to join oil insurgency groups in the Niger Delta. The objective is to stress the need for researchers on the Niger Delta to begin to focus their research lenses on all the ramifications of oil insurgency in the region.

Oil insurgency in the Niger Delta is not only complex, but the factors generating it are multitudinous. It is only when we appreciate this complexity that we can indeed advance our understanding in a significant way. Given that Nigeria's family structural system and its cultural network of relationships are patterned in multidimensional ways, which directly and indirectly influence as well as play a central role in the early sociopersonality development of her members, the mother-child, father-child, father-mother, father-community, mother-community and child-community relationships are all very important in the growth and development of a child.

It is not in dispute that the mother-child relationship is fundamentally more important than that of the father. Several reasons may explain this phenomenon. First is the fact that the mother-child relationship is the first that a child encounters with human society, a relationship that begins at infancy and grows until the child becomes an adult and even beyond.

Being the first affective relationship, the continued association of the child with the mother is considered to be positive as it helps in the general development of the child. But to ignore the relevance of a father to his child would be more or less an exaggeration of the relevance of mother, because Susan Goldberg's 1972 research in urban Zambia confirmed

that there is minimal social interaction between mother and her infant, even when the infant is being carried almost continually by its mother.

In the abstract of the result of her published findings, Goldberg: (1972:77) states that: “infants were observed in 38 homes in a high-density suburb in Zambia over the period from 4 months through 12 months. The major focus is upon the mother-infant relationship and the way in which it structures the infant’s world. A major difference between Zambian infancy and infancy in the United States is that the Zambian infant spends most of his time in close physical contact with the mother, since he is carried on her back in a sling. The negative effects of this practice on motor, cognitive and social development are discussed”. A related study in East Africa by Leiderman and Leiderman (1974, 1975) holds a similar view.

There has been extensive empirical and theoretical debate over ‘personality development’. In “the life course as development theory”, Elder (1998:1–2) interrogates “life pathways, and individual development as modes of behavioural continuity and change”. His discourse on “life pathways” or “life course” represents the most distinctive “social trajectories of education, work, and family that are followed by individuals and groups through society”. Among the studies on the development of a child from infancy to adulthood are Macfarlane’s (1968) ‘longitudinal studies of personality development’; others (Crowell and Feldman: 1980; Feldman and Ingham: 1975), tended to dwell on the extent to which the quality of the amount of time a child spent with either mother or father is very important to the child’s positive personality growth. Feldman and Ingham (1975:319) observe that:

At the heart of the attachment concept is the specificity of the emotional tie to one or a few target figures—usually the mother, father, or other family members. The existence, strength, and security of these specific ties are presumed to be critical for the ability to form lasting relationships in adolescence and adulthood, and for facilitating the child's socialization. An important criterion of behaviour that qualifies as an index of attachment is that it must be exhibited more frequently or more intensely toward those people with whom the child has strong and enduring ties than toward others.

Glen H. Elder captures the soul of the debate thus:

Historical forces shape the social trajectories of family, education, and work, and they in turn influence behaviour and particular lines of development. Some individuals are able to select the paths they follow, a phenomenon known as human agency, but these choices are not made in a social vacuum. All life choices are contingent on the opportunities and constraints of social structure and culture. These conditions clearly differed for children who grew up during the Great Depression and

World War II. Such thinking prompted the way I studied children of the Great Depression, based on the Berkeley Institute Studies. It also influenced how I proceeded to carry out a series of investigations of human life and development in different times and places—World War II and the Korean War, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, rural disadvantage in contemporary America, and inner-city poverty.

(Elder: 1998:2)

Like Elder, Broder's (2008:161) review of Grossman's (et al.: 2005) *Attachment from Infancy to Adulthood: The Major Longitudinal Studies*, observes that "attachment theory has come to the forefront, providing an understanding of how people get to be as they are – a belief that the first years of a child's life and the security of their attachment to their significant caretaker figures determine their future mental health". Broder (2008:161) describes the book as a three decade longitudinal study that provides a detailed description of "theoretical constructs" that began "with observations in the home, to the development of the laboratory strange situation, to the development of the AAI, an interviewing test". Broder (2008:161) agreed with Grossman (et al.: 2005) that "clearly having a secure base does influence the child's growth and development", but he queries that "it is not clear how".

Broder (2008:161) also contends that "there are many happenings that influence the outcome from the child's temperament, to life events, to much that we don't yet understand," and added that "security is protective but it is complex and depends on the context - the predominate affect of the caretaking figure, the quality of fit between parent and child, the sensitivity of the material, and care/commitment are all significant". He attests that "over time the quality of early life experiences does influence the ability to explore the world, develop peer relationships and, in the long run, develop close intimate adult relationships and on to the next generation and the ability to parent". Within the foregoing context, Broder (2008:161) asserts that "both parents play a strong role" in the development of the child "but in different ways". He notes that the "bottom line is that early relationships are important and shape how people turn out, but not in any specific or predictable way" because "in many ways, we are just beginning to understand the various influences".

The social and economic circumstances in which abandoned 'fatherless' children born out of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers find themselves in the Niger Delta; are a manifestation of the application of Elder's 'life course development theory'. In the case of the Niger Delta, the question is not about the quality of relationship occasioned by daily separation or disruptions of child-father relationships due to the work schedule of an expatriate working father, but total absence of expatriate fathers in the lives of

children they fathered. The total absence of these expatriate fathers in the lives of these children has had great negative impact and contributes to such children becoming aggressive and the tendency for them to join militant groups in the Niger Delta.

Worried that previous studies focus on mothers as “near-exclusive caretakers and fathers have little involvement in child care”, Lamb (et al.: 1983:450) drew inference from studies conducted by Lamb (1981) and Parke (1979) which shows that “most infants indeed form attachments to both parents”. Lamb (et al.: 1983:450) also states that “although theorists have traditionally emphasized the exclusive formative significance of the mother-infant relationship, researchers have in the last decade turned their attention to the father-infant relationship as well”. Lamb’s (et al.: 1983:450) study compares “the development of infant-mother and infant-father attachments in traditional and non-traditional families-that is, two-parent families in which fathers were, respectively, relatively uninvolved and highly involved in child care”. One of the objectives of their study was to determine the extent to which “the degree of paternal involvement in child care affected the formation of infant-father attachment”.

The absence of expatriate fathers combines with the inability of women to access employment to put mothers of ‘fatherless’ children in serious economic deprivation and constraint. In the second fold, while the deprivation of women in African enclave economies is continuously spearheaded by Western transnational corporations, Western feminists’ narrative on the role of father in the family continues to propagate largely negative postulations. For a long time there has been Western prejudice towards the importance of the role of the father, which Lamb (1976a:30) sums up thus:

My thesis is not that the father is the sole important member of that system; rather, it is that the recent trend toward a denigration of his role is misguided. Both parents contribute to the psychological development of their offspring, and it is unlikely that their contributions are independent, although...dyadic models, while simpler to conceptualize, seriously distort the psychological (and sociological) realities of the ecology in which children develop.

The question is not whether mothers are preferred to fathers by young infants or adolescent children. Even Lamb (1976a:6), who says that the answer to this question “appears to be yes”, went further to qualify the ‘yes’, because according to him: “our evidence thus far is derived from a limited number of studies, mostly involving observations in laboratory settings”. He also observes that the preferences for mother “are apparent in very specific circumstances in which the infant is distressed”; but that in “stress-free, natural

situations, infants do not exhibit a preference for either parent". The bottom line is that mothers and fathers play different but complementary roles in the socialisation of older children. The social challenges faced by mixed race 'fatherless' children in the Niger Delta, rest on that fact.

In traditional African settings, children form attachments not only to their mothers, but their fathers, grandparents and other relatives around. Besides the mother, extra familial caretakers or multiple attachments provide limited physical as well as social caretaking that complements that provided by a mother. For instance, a father's physical presence and interaction is very significant for the development and growth of a child in Africa, as is the case elsewhere. Lamb (et al.: 1983:450, 451) states that mothers are however "preferred attachment figures even when compared with the extra familial caretakers who provided much, if not most, of the caretaking". This is because mothers' "greater emotional investment suffuses their interactions and makes them more salient" (Lamb: et al.: 1983:451). When infant behaviour toward mothers and fathers were compared, both "evinced a greater emotional investment than extra familial care-takers". This was consistent with previous research findings of father-infant and mother-infant attachment.

Whether in observations taken from standardised laboratory settings (Cohen and Campos: 1974; Kotelchuck: 1976) or in observations obtained from unstructured home environment (Lamb, 1977, 1979), research reveals that infants form attachments to both of their fathers and mothers at about the same age. Lamb (et al.: 1983:451) adds that, "Attachment behaviours (separation protest, directed crying, requests to be held, touching, proximity) are much more likely to be directed to either parent than to 'habituated strangers'." Making reference to previous studies (Lamb: 1976b, 1977), Lamb (et al.: 1983:451) also observe that "in stress-free contexts, both at home and in the laboratory, infants under 13 months of age show no preference for either parent on these attachment behaviour measures".

Following research procedures described by Ainsworth her colleagues (Ainsworth, et al.: 1971, 1972), Lamb's (1978:265–266) study on the "qualitative aspects of mother-and-father-infant attachments", came to the conclusion that infants' attachments to both their mothers and fathers were the same. This makes it abundantly clear that the presence of father/mother in the life of a child provides both comfort from distressed situations as well as security, from infancy to adolescent; this is very important in the personality development of the child. Lamb's findings led to the jettisoning of earlier approaches in which focus was on absolute mother-infant relations to the near-exclusion of father-infant relationships. Lamb

(1978:265) laments that initially, little research attention was paid to “whether infants become attached to their fathers at all, whether father-infant attachments are formed at the same time as or after mother-infant relationships, and whether infants demonstrate preferences for one parent over the other”.

Based on the models of the nature of the child's adaptation to his/her care-giving environment, Bowlby (1980) has shown that children draw heavily upon experiences with the care-giving environment provided by their parents to form an internal mental working model or representation of self and others. Consequent on that, Bretherton's (1985) study also adds that the care-giving environment provided by parents becomes incorporated into the personality structure of the individual child. It is in this context that this model holds that the propensity for stability of a child's personality development, once established by a relatively stable care-giving environment provided by a parent, tends to not only be perpetuated (Bowlby: 1980), but to have high chances of sustainability in adulthood.

Sroufe and Fleeson (1986) draw attention to the fact that internal mental representations of the self of a child vis-à-vis otherness; encompasses all processes in which both parent and child roles are experienced by the individual child in childhood development. In is within the foregoing context that the work of Belsky (et al.: 1984) submits that a child's behaviours and characteristics from a very early age are shaped and transformed by the sum total of parent-child interactions. Crowell and Feldman's (1980:1284) research on *Mothers' Internal Models of Relationships and Children's Behavioural and Developmental Status: A Study of Mother-Child Interaction*, also came to the conclusion that the behaviour of mothers and children always corresponds to “situational factors such as partner's behaviour and task difficulty” as well as their longstanding “interactional history”.

The restiveness and violence raging the Niger Delta has also led to other forms of sexual challenges that women have had to cope with. This has to do with sexual violence orchestrated against women in the Niger by Nigerian state security forces. Such forces are usually sent to restore peace. It is this social dimension of the enclave nature of the oil economy that is the preoccupation of the next section.

### **3.6 OTHER FORMS OF SEXUALLY-RELATED CHALLENGES AGAINST WOMEN IN THE NIGER-DELTA**

In an address to his 150-strong rag-tag Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) rebellious troops against the Nigerian state in February 1966, Isaac Boro told them to be mindful of all the forms of ill treatments that women are usually subjected to in times of wars and civil



revolts. He cautioned and warned the troops against any form of sexual violations, abuse or liaisons with women thus:

...for the good name of the Ijaws, do not commit atrocities such as rape, looting or robbery. Whatever people say, we must maintain our integrity. Moreover, you know it is against Ijaw tradition to mess about with women during war. You have been purified these many days. Be assured that if you do not get yourselves defiled within the period of battle, you shall return home safe even if we fail.<sup>7</sup>

Boro's prophetic warnings have come to pass. Sexual violence against women in the Niger Delta has blossomed and become an arsenal in the hands of Nigerian security forces. This section reviews how Nigerian state security forces have used women's bodies to terrorise whole communities and execute gender-specific violence in their counter insurgency tactics in the Niger Delta. This section discusses how the Nigerian state deploys sexual violence against women as a psychological weapon to humiliate citizens and destroy resistance in the Niger Delta. In oil producing villages, the majority of the immediate victims of violence have persistently been women, children and the elderly. So whenever a community or village is attacked, it is these vulnerable groups that are immediately affected. Women have suffered various forms of violation, including rape; military imposed prostitution, physical abuse, maiming and murder. In some cases, women are forced to watch their husbands, partners or children being tortured or executed. Women are the ones who are made widows when their husbands are killed by state security forces. Such widows live in trauma, nightmare and solitary confinement.

Ekine's (2008:71–78) graphical account and analysis of "women's responses to state violence in the Niger Delta", shows that sexually abused women who flee their homes in distress and rejection by their husbands or family members are paradoxically forced by the circumstance of their poverty to avail their bodies to the same rampaging security forces in exchange for food, false protection and personal safety. In another forum, Ekine<sup>8</sup> also notes thus: "following an attack on an Ogoni village, a young sixteen-year-old runs with her junior siblings to hide in the bush away from the soldiers. After three days, the young girl ventured out to find food and water only to be found by the soldiers who raped and beat her in front of her siblings." Following the Kaiama declaration on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1998 by Ijaw youths, the

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<sup>7</sup>See "Boro the Man", Monday, May 26, 2003, <http://www.unitedijawstates.com/boro.htm#address> by Akamande, N.

<sup>8</sup>. See "Women in the Niger Delta: Violence and Struggle" by Sokari Ekine (1999), accessed on: 05/10/2010, at: <http://www.ndwj.kabissa.org/ArticlesResearch/Sok1/sok1.htm#ViolenceStruggle>,

town was subjected to systematic abuse and unrestrained violence including alleged raping and beating of women of all ages<sup>9</sup>. In the case of the Choba community of Rivers State, about 67 women and young girls including pregnant women were alleged to have been raped and flogged by military personnel<sup>10</sup>. In trying to reconcile their primary societal responsibility as wives, mothers and daughters with that of serving the sexual urges of state security forces, women have had to pay with their bodies and minds. Given their absolute economic poverty, inability to afford medical services and the non-existence of trauma counselling and rehabilitation services, most of these women adopt awkward silences and amnesia as a survival strategy (Ekine: 2008:73–74). This study holds that the environmental crisis in the Niger-Delta has therefore produced gender-specific forms of violence.

As pointed out elsewhere, oil mineral extractive activities are predominantly male operated. There has been mass movement of men from within and outside Nigeria into the Niger Delta region. This potentially creates major social and health risks. Mabogunje (1996:8–9) notes that a general increase in human population puts pressure on available natural resources and can bring about problems such as squatter settlements, overcrowding, and spread of communicable diseases. Ogwumike and Ozughalu (2001:4) observed that the incidence of prostitution and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS have been associated with population pressure. The surrounding informal and formal settlements often function to provide sex and entertainment to male oil workers, military personnel and other state security forces. In southern Africa HIV and AIDS infection is said to be “highest in areas of major mining operations.”<sup>11</sup>

History has also shown that war and conflict situations have always been associated with military prostitution (Goldstein: 2001). Military commanders are known world-wide to encourage or in some cases directly organise prostitution, or to serve their troops with “comfort girls” as was done by the Japanese army of occupation in China, Korea and other occupied countries (Goldstein: 2001:345–346). The Roman-Empire is known to have operated a ring of brothels for its armies. The late sixteenth century Spanish army invasion of the Netherlands, the American civil war, the French, German, British, American and

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9. See “Environmental Testimonies No. 12: War and Terror in Ijawland, Yanago, January 6th 1999,” in *Protecting the Environment, Democratizing Development*, accessed on: 05/10/2010, at: <http://www.essentialaction.org/shell/era/eraEnvTest12html>, By Environmental Rights Action, Port Harcourt, Nigeria,

10 See: “Women in the Niger Delta: Violence and Struggle” by Sokari Ekine (1999)... op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> See: *Executive Summary: The Corporate Social Responsibility Programs of the Platinum Mining Industry in the Platinum-Producing Region of the North West Province*. Report by Bench Marks Foundation of Southern Africa for Corporate Social Responsibility (Bench Marks Foundation) 2006, page 2.

Japanese armies in World Wars I and II, the Vietnam war, United Nations peacekeeping troops in Bosnia, Kosovo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and recently the civil war in Sudan, all had traces of military-supervised brothels or military-approved prostitution centres (Goldstein: 2001:342–348). During the American civil war, military prostitutes were known as “Hooker girls” a name derived from the Civil War General Joseph Hooker (Goldstein: 2001:342).

There is also the problem of military-imposed prostitution on Niger Delta women. As directly observed, wherever the army goes they set up their own brothels forcing local girls to prostitute themselves. In the Niger Delta, families face additional victimisation if they try to protect their children and refuse the military. In terms of physical violence, women are beaten, maimed and abused by the military and police. In every instance the military and police usually turn peaceful demonstrations and protests into carnage. For women the result is always rape, beatings, amputations or worse. Ekine cited a case of Egi community of Rivers State, where a young woman was beaten by the police for daring to bring food for her brother who had been jailed in a police station for distributing leaflets protesting police brutality<sup>12</sup>.

Sexual violence against women and girls is pervasive and constitutes a core component of contemporary armed conflict (Honwana: 2006:75–103; Mazurana et al.: 2005:1–42). Global debate on the effects of armed conflict has however tended to focus on boys and young men to the omission of the experience of women and girls (Nordstrom: 1997). Similarly, post-conflict demobilisation and re-integration programs do not always explore the experiences of, or calculate the effects of war on women and girls (Meintjes: et al: 2001). Visible narratives on war experiences of women and girls are usually limited to the domain of news papers and television stories. Women are subsumed within the general civilian populations who are displaced from their homes or injured. As Honwana (2006: 75) puts it, women “are lumped into aggregate categories and included in statistical reports along with adults of both sexes”. But the experiences of girls and young women in areas of violent conflict shows that families in such areas are torn apart, means of education and livelihood destroyed, and home place riddled with landmines. In effect, the distinctive characteristics of women in conflict zones are that they are the most vulnerable because of their gender. The voices of women are often not heard.

As noted earlier, the Niger-Delta has produced its own gender-specific violence. It has been alleged that state military raids against protesting youths is usually characterised by

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<sup>12</sup> See: “Women in the Niger Delta: Violence and Struggle” by Sokari Ekine (1999)... op. cit

flagrant human rights abuse. Such crimes against humanity range from looting, flogging, extortion, gang rapes and other forms of sexual abuse. The female gender has been alleged to be the most vulnerable (African Woman: 1995). In some cases, rape and sexual abuse could be used by security forces to extract useful information from women suspected of involvement with armed opposition or even to punish women who simply live in areas known to be sympathetic to oil insurgents.

It should be added that during the peak of the crisis in the 1990s, rape became endemic in the Niger Delta because state security forces used women's bodies to satisfy their sexual urges. The perception of women's bodies as an extension of the theatre of war by soldiers has been part and parcel of strategic manoeuvres by most militaries in human history. Narrating how this scenario plays out in the U.S. army, Goldstein (2001:350) quotes chants usually evoked by American soldiers at a basic training thus: "this is my rifle [holding up rifle], this is my gun [pointing to penis]; one's for killing, the other's for fun". Goldstein (2001:350) also states that US military commanders usually "rile up their troops before battle by showing them pornography or lewd entertainment." And that during the first Gulf War, pilots on a US air craft carrier were reported to have watched "pornographic movies before flying bombing missions." British troops were officially sanctioned to watch the pornographic movie "*Emmanuelle*" before embarking on the Falklands War (Goldstein: 2001:351–354). It is often assumed that male sexuality increases aggressiveness, but this is yet to be scientifically confirmed.

The Japanese Imperial army system of "comfort women" was a large scale organised practice in which thousands of women in occupied countries were raped and forced into sexual slavery. The Japanese military burnt and destroyed documentary evidence (Goldstein 2001:346). There is no official documentary evidence that the Nigerian state has reacted to the countless allegations by victims that there have been rampant incidents of rape by security forces in the Niger Delta. Silence on the part of the Nigerian state would seem to suggest that it is not prepared to accept that the acts exist and will not address the problem. This is similar to the conclusions of Goldstein on the "comfort women":

...just as sexual abuse in other contexts leads to secrecy and silence, so did the comfort system seemingly disappear from history after the war... In the huge literature... on the Pacific War, we could find no mention... of comfort women... Just before surrendering in 1945, Japanese forces appointed comfort women as civilian employees (nurses), then destroyed the evidence... Japanese textbooks have omitted the subject... the truth was hidden. Living victims were too intimidated to challenge

the might of the Japanese state. All documentary evidence appeared to have been burned.

(Goldstein: 2001:346).

In the course of raids by Nigerian State Security Forces, soldiers usually rape both young and old women alike. Recounting how soldiers raped her and her 13-year-old sister during one of the raids on Bori, Rivers state in June 1994, a young woman states her experience as follows; “the soldiers pursued us and pushed me down. They kicked me and hit my junior sister’s mouth with a wooden stick. They...tore my dress. One soldier held each of my legs. Then each of the four soldiers took turns. I was lying in a pool of blood when they left...My small sister was crying...since then, I have not had my period. I have severe pains in my lower abdomen”. She concludes, “at times I can’t move” (African woman: 1995:52).

Narrating a similarly harrowing account of her alleged gang rape by soldiers in the morning of May 28, 1994 a woman in her late thirties from the village of Bera recounts her ordeal thus: “the soldiers accused us of running because we were responsible for the murders. They beat me with the butts of their guns, pushed me to the ground, and kicked me. They tore off my wrapper, then my under wear...Each of them took turns...Two of them raped me through my anus, three the usual way...While one soldier raped me another would beat me. I tried to scream, but they held my mouth. They said if I made too much noise, they would kill me”, and “by the time they left, I was in so much pain I could not move” (African Woman: 1995:52).

In countries including the Philippines, Myanmar, Columbia, Bangladesh, Turkey, Mauritania, Somalia, Kuwait during the invasion by Iraq, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mozambique, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leon, and Ivory Coast, horrifying war stories show that sexual abuse and exploitation of women’s bodies have been part and parcel of the theatre of war (Honwana: 2006; Nordstrom: 1997). The role played by women’s bodies as a theatre of war in the Niger-Delta would be better appreciated if placed within the context of the alleged sexual exploits executed by Nigerian senior military commanders. For instance, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Okuntimo, the then Commanding Officer who led one of the many operations into Ogoni villages by the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, was alleged to have committed rape. It was specifically alleged that on two separate occasions, Okuntimo pointed out specific Ogoni women to his soldiers and asked that they be brought to a house he had requisitioned in the village of Kpor. When Okuntimo was finished, his soldiers were said to have taken the women away (African woman 1995:53). Okuntimo’s penchant for the use of violence as a ‘psychological warfare’ against Ogoni people was succinctly captured in the

text of his May 1994 press conference broadcast by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) thus:

The first three days, the first three days of operations, I operated in the night. Nobody knew where I was coming from. What I will just do is that I will just take some detachments of soldiers; they will just stay at four corners of the town. They...have automatic rifle(s) that sold death. If you hear the sound you will freeze. And then I will equally now choose about twenty (soldiers) and give...them grenades...explosives...very hard one(s). So we shall surround the town at night...The machine gun with five hundred rounds will open up. When four or five like that open up and then we are throwing grenades and they are making 'eekpuwaa!' what do you think people are going to do? And we have already put roadblock(s) on the main road, we don't want anybody to start running... so the option we made was that we should drive all these boys, all these people into the bush with nothing except the pant(s) and wrapper they are using that night.

(Civil Liberties Organization - CLO: 1996:64–65)

Widespread sexual abuse and rape of women by state security forces in the Niger Delta recently attracted the attention of the General Officer Commanding (GOC) the 82 Division of the Nigerian Army<sup>13</sup>. The GOC warned men and officers of the two Amphibious Brigades, Bori Camp, operating in Port Harcourt and other parts of the Niger Delta under the umbrella of Joint Task Force (JTF), to desist from the practice. The GOC reminded the soldiers that the Niger Delta is not a war zone and that they are not an army of occupation. He lamented the attitude of some soldiers who engage in the practice of abusing women and treating civilians with indignity while on security duty. The GOC emphatically asserted that soldiers and state security forces do not adhere to army standing rules against drinking and womanising while on duty.<sup>14</sup> Reports by Ogundele in 2007<sup>15</sup> also indicate that threats of military attacks and sexual violence against women by state security forces led to mass exodus of women and other law-abiding residents from their homes in Bodo community in Gokana Local Government area of Rivers state.

On the instruction of the Joint Task Force (JTF), the entire Bodo community was ordered to produce all militants and guns in its care within three days or risk a military

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<sup>13</sup>See "Rivers not a War Zone, General Officer Commanding (GOC) tells Joint Task Force (JTF) Soldiers," in *The Nation Online*, Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007, by Azuatalam, C, accessed on: 10/10/2007, at: <http://www.thenationonline.com/dynamicpage.asp?id=30345>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> See: "Residents Flee Community for Fear of Military Attack: We've no Such Plan – Army," *Nigerian Tribune*, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2007, by Ogundele, B, accessed on: 10/10/2007, at: <http://www.tribune.com.ng/05092007/news/news5.html>

assault. The military order did not specify which guns or who the threat was particularly directed at. The only option open to women and the entire community was to vacate and relocate to safer places. By the time the security forces arrived, Bodo was empty<sup>16</sup>. Violence does not actually need to take place. Once it has been established as the norm, mere threat of it is taken seriously by potential victims. The fact is that except heavily guarded residents of government officials and top officers of oil companies, there is the possibility of violence at any place and time in the Niger Delta. Women walk in fear as they try to go about their daily work. Fear of being raped, of being beaten or maimed. In addition many husbands, fathers and sons have been killed or maimed leaving women to assume even greater responsibilities. This has meant enduring serious hardship.

As far back as 1993, rape had become an official weapon in the hands of state security forces and security elements of oil companies against the Ogoni campaigns led by Ken Saro-Wiwa. Ekine<sup>17</sup> states that in some cases rape took place in the presence of “husbands, children, siblings and other members of the community.” She added thus: “women are often dragged from their homes at night, they and their husbands threatened with violence if they do not comply; and that in some instances the rapes actually take place in the victims’ home<sup>18</sup>. She asserted that “systematic rapes took place en masse”<sup>19</sup> between December 1998 and January 1999. This period coincided with the ‘Kaiama declaration’ dateline of December 30 1999. Several thousand state security troops were moved into the Ijaw areas of Delta and Bayelsa states. On 30<sup>th</sup> December, several thousand youths supporting the Kaiama Declaration, demonstrated peacefully in Yenagoa, Bomadi, Oloibiri and other Ijaw communities. That same evening the governor of Bayelsa State declared a state of emergency.

In enforcing the state of emergency, youths were attacked and beaten. Some were injured; others seriously wounded and killed by the rampaging troops. A separate military attack was launched against the women and girls and many of them were alleged to have been raped in Yenagoa, the state capital. According to Ekine, these women were “dragged from their shacks together with their husbands and then threatened with additional violence if they did not comply with the rapes”<sup>20</sup>. In some of the cases, women were said to have not only been raped in their own homes, but that neither pregnancy nor age was barrier

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> See: “Women in the Niger Delta: Violence and Struggle” by Sokari Ekine (1999)... op. cit

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

to these brutal disgusting acts of sexual violence. One bizarre example reported by Ekine was the case of a set of 12-year-old twins who were raped by three soldiers in front of their older brother in their own home. The physical bodies and lives of these twins was “ruined in an orgy of crazed violence”<sup>21</sup>

What cannot be quantified by a sociological study like this is how to measure the sum total of the psychological impact of gender-specific sexual violence perpetrated against women in the Niger Delta by state security forces. This dimension of the problem should be addressed by social and clinical psychologists. Vickers (1993:18) sums up the problem of women's trauma and collective memory in the Niger-Delta thus:

Left to sustain the family and endure the loneliness and vulnerability of separation, women suffer great hardships in wartime. They and those they care for, may be killed or injured in ethnic fighting or civil disturbances in spite of being innocent bystanders. Their houses may be damaged, or they may flee from home in fear of their lives. Dwindling food supplies and hungry children exacerbate tensions. And so, to the loss of husbands, fathers, sons and brothers who are killed in battle, is added the longer-suffering of further deprivation.

Marwick (1988) submits that throughout human history, defenceless women have always encountered the direct dreadful tragedy and suffering of war and sexual violence; but that it has always been relatively difficult to document trauma and memories because of the silences associated with these unspeakable crimes. Gender-specific sexual violence by occupying troops in the Niger Delta means many things to victims. It may mean the loss of livelihood because rampaging troops have been accused of looting the harvested crops and destruction of anything of value on their path<sup>22</sup>. For the majority of people in the Niger Delta whose subsistence survival is already threatened by oil, attacks by rampaging troops therefore means additional responsibilities for women, as they are the ones to pick the pieces, tend to the children and provide the basic needs to members of households who survive the military attacks.

Besides the physical injuries suffered by women and girls as a result of violent flogging and beatings by security forces, the mental health dimensions, traumatic disorder and shame associated with rape and other forms of sexual abuse remains a major problem. Although this dimension of the problem is not the immediate preoccupation of this study, it is however pertinent to stress that because rape could sometime results in pregnancy, the horror of sexual

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



violence is carried into the next generations. For victims and their families, the situation is made worse by the fact that most of the victims do not have the financial resources to access medical services, psychological support facilities and counselling centres. Coping with the sporadic and deadly outbreaks of violence in the volatile Niger Delta region is therefore a major problem. The only hospital that addresses trauma related problems in the Niger-Delta is the 70-bed *Teme Trauma Centre*.<sup>23</sup> It was established in October 2005 by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Port Harcourt. This hospital itself is usually overwhelmed with patients because it provides free medical service. The management of MSF hospital complained that the upsurge of violence in the Niger-Delta made it very difficult for the hospital to provide the necessary medical care and psychological counselling require for patients' traumatic relief and eventual recovery. Between July and August 2007, the hospital was stretched beyond its limit<sup>24</sup>.

In the first two weeks of August, the *Teme Trauma Centre* hospital management states that it treated 71 gunshot wounds, 27 stabbings, 16 serious beatings, and 1 rape. In addition, seven patients died from their injuries. This period recorded one of the highest numbers of gunshot wounded patients since Teme Hospital was opened in October 2005. In July 2007, 72 gunshot victims were received in the hospital and was one of the worst months on record. A woman was brought with high velocity gunshot wound on her jaw. Her situation was so bad that her entire lower face was shot off. The report states that the whole lower portion of her jaw was missing. Because the wound required what the hospital referred to as "an emergency tracheotomy", the only option was that "we had to have the maxillofacial surgeon work on her"<sup>25</sup>. This meant multiple surgeries over up to eight months to repair the injury. She was not expected to have a hundred percent recovery because "it will never be like her real face"<sup>26</sup> again. The spokesperson of *Teme Trauma Centre* sums up the situation of another victim of state security violence thus:

In the same group, we had a man who was shot in the head and the bullet traversed both of his eye sockets. He lost one eye and the other was injured. We had two young men who were shot and both arrived at the hospital with paralysis because the bullets passed though their spines. One of the men eventually died from his injuries. One of the challenges is keeping enough blood on hand. The wounded get to

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<sup>23</sup> See "Niger Delta: MSF admits record number of gunshot victims," 14<sup>th</sup> August 2007, [http://www.msf.ca/en/news/newsreleases/2007/081407\\_portharcourt.html](http://www.msf.ca/en/news/newsreleases/2007/081407_portharcourt.html)

<sup>24</sup>Ibid

<sup>25</sup>Ibid

<sup>26</sup>Ibid

us late because they have to organize their own transport to the hospital and most of them have lost significant amounts of blood by the time they reach us<sup>27</sup>.

For most patients, the costs of medical care in Port Harcourt are prohibitive. Although MSF provides free medical care the number of patients that troop into the hospital is overwhelming and this makes it difficult to provide a comprehensive trauma recovery service to all victims. It is important too to note that the high level of poverty amongst women victims aggravates the situation for the female gender. Poverty combines with the shame associated with rape to stop some of the women from patronising the services of MSF trauma hospital. In short there is nothing to alleviate the pain; there isn't even time, as children need to be fed, farms farmed, produce sold. Rejection suffered by victims of rape, together with poverty, lack of education and absence of alternative sources of survival, drives some of them further into acts of prostitution. In their struggle to survive, some of these women and girls are alleged to have been forced by their economic deprivation to “engage in bestiality” in return for financial payment “by some expatriates.”<sup>28</sup>

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reviews the range of academic literature that has previously discussed issues to do with oil and sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. Issues on ‘fatherless’ children and the place of fatherhood are also discussed. This chapter serves two broad purposes. Firstly, in the tradition of literature review of previous research works, it provides the context into which this study fits and to which it responds in the discussion of sexual liaisons and ‘fatherlessness’ of children. Secondly, issues reviewed in this chapter allow this study to identify some of the ways in which previous scholarly works have constructed certain ways of thinking about and dealing with ‘fatherlessness’ and child development. In other words; the chapter interrogates the literature to find explanations or major discourses on the potential for ‘fatherless’ children to be aggressive against society.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid

<sup>28</sup> See: “Women in the Niger Delta: Violence and Struggle” by Sokari Ekine (1999)... op. cit

## **CHAPTER 4: METHOD OF RESEARCH:**

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### **4 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the data collection methods used in this study. To achieve our research goals, this study adopts qualitative research techniques. Harvey and Myers (1995:13) argue that because “research methods are the means by which knowledge is acquired and constructed within a discipline”, it is mandatory that research methods adopted by scholars are “both relevant and rigorous in order to be accepted as legitimate within a particular field of knowledge”. In doing qualitative research there are several commonly used methods. Among qualitative methods adopted in this study are documentary sources, interviewing and ethnographic methods of data collection. Besides published and unpublished documents, the desk or secondary research method in this study also utilised personal diaries, and photographs (visual sociology). The primary variance includes extensive use of In-depth (open-ended) Interviews (IDIs); telephone interviews, life histories, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and other ethnographic methods of observations. There were no specific structured questions. The adoption of multiple methods of data collection provides for flexibility that enables coverage of a wide range of dimension of the research problem under investigation.

Every potential research participant or group of participants received the copy of introductory letters written in advance by the Head of Sociology Department, Rhodes University (see appendices 1 and 2). This letter explains the purpose and objective of research; sensitised participants, key informants, traditional institutions/gate keepers, as well as other relevant institutions and requested their attention, cooperation and support in the execution of the field work exercise. Field research work was carried out from December 2007 to May 2008. One thing that stood out clearly, is that women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers did not subscribe to the FGDs because they wanted to keep their identities as anonymous as possible. They therefore opted to tell their life histories in a one-to-one interview.

There was no specific or particular time of day or day of week in which interviews or observations were conducted. However, most interviews and FGDs were conducted in the mornings and evenings at the convenience of participants. Timing of interview schedules was a function of the availability of participants. This approach yielded high participation.

A comparative check on all qualitative methods of data collection techniques adopted in this study did not show any inherent superiority of one interviewing method over another; each method adopted was adequately targeted to obtain credible and complementary information. At the end of their interviews, some participants offered suggestions and began to see the main research team as an intervention team that could help facilitate government response to the problems discussed during the interview sessions.

Our conclusions were that the method of interview had no fundamental impact on the outcome of our research. If anything, all the methods helped to counterbalance our findings. There is no evidence from data collected to suggest that one method resulted in more incisive information on the research problem under investigation than the others. What is apparent is that all methods adopted in this study counterbalanced each other.

#### **4.1 DOING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

The qualitative research adopted in this study is a semi-structured interview schedule that allows our target participants to respond to our inquiry by sharing their views and feelings in “a conversational format, without the constraints of a structured questionnaire”.<sup>29</sup> We employed projective qualitative research techniques that assisted us to delve deeper into participants’ psyche, with the objective of uncovering their underlying opinions and feelings on the research objectives and questions which would not have been readily apparent in a more structured quantitative data collection process. Qualitative projective techniques therefore became valuable tools that encouraged and made our participants relatively more comfortable to discuss issues, air out their opinions and provide more insights on the problems and questions within the research.

There are indeed various ways of conducting research. These can be divided into two broad distinct methods. These two distinguishable research methods are the Quantitative or Positivist approach and the Qualitative or Interpretive approach (Myers: 1997; Lee: 1991). Quantitative research approach originates from the natural sciences, its focus and methods

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<sup>29</sup>See “Qualitative Market Research Overview”, accessed on: 06/06/2010, at: [http://www.resolutions.co.nz/qualitative\\_market\\_research\\_overview.htm](http://www.resolutions.co.nz/qualitative_market_research_overview.htm)

“study natural phenomena”, and “data is collected in an objective and replicable manner” (Sidi: et al.: 2009:47–48). The quantitative or positivist approach is conventionally considered as the more traditional research method. Its research procedures encompass “inferential statistics, hypothesis testing, mathematical analysis, and experimental and quasi-experimental design” (Lee: 1991:342). According to Sidi (et al.: 2009:48), prominent variance of the quantitative or positivist methods ranges from numerical methods such as mathematical modelling, laboratory experiments, and formal forms of econometrics. Sidi also discloses that the tools often employed by quantitative research methods include test performance scores, physiological readings, survey responses and spectrometer readings.

Many differences have been identified between quantitative and qualitative research (Lee, 1991). Some of these differences have tended to be referential in nature, and tend to range from epistemic to paradigmatic issues (Galliers: 1985). Along this line of argument, Parker (1998:3) invites our attention to the difference between quantitative and qualitative research. He asserts that “quantification all too often fuels the fantasy of prediction and control, but qualitative research ... takes as its starting point an awareness of the gap between an object of study and the way we represent it, and the way interpretation necessarily comes to fill that gap”. He also attests that the qualitative “process of interpretation provides a bridge between the world and us, between our objects and our representations of them, but it is important to remember that interpretation is a process, a process that continues as our relation to the world keeps changing”. He then concludes that to properly undertake qualitative research, we must “follow that process and acknowledge that there will always be a gap between the things we want to understand and our accounts of what they are like”.

One fundamental difference between quantitative and qualitative research approaches dwells on the different ways in which each approach treats ‘context’. In the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski (1932:6) argues that context is at the very heart of qualitative observations and analyses (the utility value of context is discussed in relative detail under ethnographic methods of observations in this chapter). Context gives room to qualitative researchers to adopt research techniques which enable them to explore and weave contextual webs to strengthen their search to uncover knowledge and meaning of reality. Context is therefore the main body of techniques and thrust in the domain of the qualitative variance known as ethnography.

Harvey and Myers (1995:17) explain that ‘context’ is treated differently by both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. They posit that “in more traditional quantitative techniques, context is treated as either a set of interfering variables that need

controlling, known as noise in the data, and other controlled variables which are experimentally set up in order to seek for cause and effect relationships". Harvey and Myers (1995:17) also note that in traditional qualitative approaches, context is treated as the "socially constructed reality of a named group, or groups, of social agents". The key task of observers and analysis then becomes that of unpacking "the webs of meaning transformed in the social process whereby reality is constructed". While quantitative research techniques focus more on "cause and effect" as the main objects being searched for, "meaning in context is the most important framework being sought" in qualitative techniques.

Parker (1998:1) argues that in qualitative research techniques, context gives "integrity" to the data or material collected. Harvey and Myers (1995:18) point out that the importance of 'context' in qualitative research was first raised by Malinowski (1932). According to them, Malinowski "departed from previous researchers" by "suggesting that cultural practices from other societies could only be understood by studying the context in which they took place". Harvey and Myers acknowledge that prior to the emergence of Malinowski, Eurocentric scholarship "had simply taken various cultural practices out of context". That explains why non Western cultural practices "appeared strange" to Eurocentric scholars. Stressing the very importance of context, Harvey and Myers (1995:18) advocate thus: "by learning the local language and living in a society for at least one or more years, by trying to understand the meaning of particular cultural practices in context, only then would other cultures and societies start to make sense to Western observers".

Malinowski provided the groundwork for the scientific emergence of ethnographic research method as an intensive fieldwork. According to Harvey and Myers (1995:18), "anthropologists coined the term "ethnocentrism" to refer to the tendency of people in most cultures to think of their own culture as the best and most sensible". This explains why they defined a good ethnographer as a person who "sensitized" the reader to the beliefs, values, and practices of the natives in another society" (Harvey and Myers: 1995:18).

Parker (1998:1) defines qualitative research method as "an array of alternative approaches to those in the mainstream". He also adds that "qualitative research can be defined first in a simple, but quite loose, way", because it is "the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made" (Parker (1998:2).

Paraphrasing Cresswell (1994), Sidi (et al.: 2009:48) understood qualitative method of study to mean "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, and reporting in a natural setting". Myers and

Newman (2007:241) hold that that qualitative research entails the use of qualitative data collection techniques “such as interviews, documents, and participant observation, to understand and explain social phenomena”. Qualitative data sources also include observations made during fieldwork, documents and texts reviewed, as well as the researcher’s impressions or reactions to field research configurations. Lee (1991:342) conceptualised qualitative or interpretive approach to mean research “procedures as those associated with ethnography, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and case studies”. Harvey and Myers (1995:17) sum it up by stating that “there is an extremely broad range of qualitative techniques, ranging from anything that does not directly deal with numbers to the most in-depth and self-reflective interpretive techniques”.

As mentioned elsewhere, the decision to adopt qualitative research techniques in this study is meant to facilitate the realisation of our research goals and objectives. Qualitative method of data collection means that data collection is done in natural ethnographic human settings, rather than in artificially constructed contexts. The import of this has adequately been captured by Denzin and Lincoln (2003:47) thus: “The socially situated researcher creates through interaction the realities that constitute the places where empirical materials are collected and analysed. In such sites, the interpretive practices of qualitative research are implemented. These methodological practices represent different ways of generating empirical materials grounded in the everyday world.”

We are not in anyway saying that the qualitative method of data collection techniques has not attracted criticism or has not been associated with scientifically identified weaknesses. Adopting a qualitative and ethnographic research method is appropriate for this study because quantitative research methods consistent with a positivist approach (Benbasat, et al: 1987:370–380; Lee: 1989:34–41; Yin: 1994) would only succeed in obscuring the subtleties of the meaning that participants’ narratives and words are meant to convey. While qualitative approach elicits a deeper understanding of participants’ verbal responses, a quantitative data collection technique would not adequately translate participants’ quantum sums, percentages or measure of associations into the real or equivalent meanings that reflect the participants’ intended inert feelings. Quantity or numbers are not words. Numbers do not carry instant meanings as do words. If I had adopted a quantitative method or inquiry, it would have been extremely difficult to explain in relative details the inner mind of participants who choose a Yes or No as an answer to a question. But in open ended qualitative interviews, each individual participant is in position to describe her/his inner

feelings in words that can easily be understood and appreciated by even lay members of the general public.

By adopting the qualitative approach, I am also not in anyway implying that it is superior to the quantitative approach. Lee (1991:342) adequately provides a refutation to the “widely held notion that the positivist and interpretive (ethnographic) approaches are opposed and irreconcilable”. His refutation consists of a framework that attempts to integrate the two approaches as well as to demonstrate the extent to which the two can be “mutually supportive, rather than mutually exclusive”. Parker (1998:1) warned that we cannot “set quantitative and qualitative traditions in diametric opposition to one another”, because “we would lose sight of the value of much qualitative research if we were to do so”. He points out that while qualitative research does not discount numerically summarised data collected through the rigour of quantitative sampling techniques “represented in statistical form”, concern of the qualitative approach rests on quantitative research processes of reduction and abstraction which reaches a point where the context under which the data was collected “completely disappears”.

Lee (1991:342–343) also called for the two approaches to find a common ground so that each can “play an active role in strengthening the other in a truly collaborative research effort, as opposed to one that merely allows the two approaches to maintain a peaceful but separate co-existence”. In conclusion he submits that the constraints upon the two approaches are to: “accept the fundamental concepts of the Positives approach, to accept the fundamental concepts of the Interpretive approach, to provide an even-handed treatment that does not favour one approach over the other, and to recognise the methodological legitimacy of the procedures of each approach, apart from the legitimacy of their integration and collaboration” (Lee: 1991:343). Following Lee’s advocacy, Harvey and Myers (1995:17) have even argued that “many qualitative techniques do make reference to numerical representations of the contextual elements under observation”.

Sanday (1979:528) argues that qualitative research entails “a variety of data collection tools” employed to supplement each other “depending on the problem, access to data, and theoretical orientation”. These methods “may range from key-informant interviewing, collection of life histories, structured interviews, and questionnaire administration to the less well-known techniques of ethno-science”. Sanday (1979:528–529) also states that “the main reason for employing a variety of data collection procedures” in qualitative research is to enable the investigator to “cross check results obtained from observation and recorded in field notes”. In our search for research methods that can help uncover the social meanings of



the impact of oil extractive activities on OBCs in this study; we found the qualitative techniques to be the most relevant.

The social dimension of the impact of oil extractive activities on local communities can adequately be described in words or linguistic terms and not in any form of quantum figures or alien models that stand as abstracts to the Niger Delta. While quantum figures of the barrels of crude oil exploited and exported, and the value of environmental degradation occasioned by crude oil pollution can make statistical meaning, individual human understanding and social feelings of the impact of oil extractive activities can adequately be described in words or visual pictures. With words, linguistic categorisations, artefacts or visual pictures, participants in this study have been able to explain how, and the extent to which, oil enclave economy is at the heart of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta.

The adoption of a qualitative approach facilitates our understanding of how the intricacies of an oil economy system and processes impact on individuals and of the challenges posed to communities, in contrast to quantitative responses which indicate 'Yes' or 'No'. This is because 'Yes' or 'No' answers are incapable of explaining the inner feelings of individuals or groups in OBCs. It is the position of this study that human feelings towards any socioeconomic and cultural configuration can adequately be described in words, actions or linguistic categories. The foregoing partly explains why we adopted the qualitative research principles in this study.

## **4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN: NEGOTIATING FIELD ACCESS**

Fieldwork is the central activity of qualitative data gathering. To be in the field means to have direct and personal contact with people in their own environments. For obvious financial and timeframe reasons, it was not possible to study the entire population of the Niger Delta and expect to achieve the in-depth investigation that is intended. This study therefore limits its fieldwork to purposively selected oil enclave sites or areas within the two purposively selected states. Access by researchers to mapped-out research sites has been subjected to considerable debate (Shaffir, et al.: 1980; Shenton and Hyater: 2004). Berg (2007:184) describes access to research sites as "gaining entry, or getting in, to a research locale or setting". According to him, this "can be fraught with difficulties, and researchers need to remain flexible concerning their tactics and strategies". He also added that "knowledge about the people being studied and familiarity with their routines and rituals facilitate entry as well as rapport once one has gained entry".

The mapping of potential participants involved in sexual liaisons with oil company expatriate workers was initially difficult and looked impossible to accomplish because of the stigma associated with the practice. No woman would publicly admit that she engages in sexual liaisons with oil expatriate workers. One other major problem was the fact that the main researcher is an 'outsider' or not indigenous to the Niger Delta region. But after taking residence in Port Harcourt and making several tireless contacts with gatekeepers and key informants in both Rivers and Akwa Ibom states, the situation that initially looked almost impossible, began to change slightly. In fact the geo-locations and residential mapping of research sites and contact with potential respondents were informed by information provided by gatekeepers, active youths (girls/boys) or key informants.

In the negotiation for field access, the first major problem was that the main researcher is a Nigerian but not from the Niger Delta region. Secondly, coming from the Northern part of the country which has produced about 90 percent of the political leaders who have ruled Nigeria and by extension managed and mismanaged oil revenues, it was initially difficult for my contacts in Rivers and Akwa Ibom states to accept that my research was genuine, and that I was not sponsored by the Federal government, or that I was not funded by the United States via South Africa to spy and collect vital information on local communities in the Niger Delta for use by foreign oil companies.

Taylor (1998:38) argues that in some cases, the complexity of negotiating field access or hostility confronted by researchers may be a function of suspicion, that they are "seen as government spies or tools of management". The concerns then shift to "what kind of person the researcher is, rather than the purpose of the researcher", and this "can often render the research impossible". This has a tendency to generate the following questions against the researchers; "can they be trusted, can they be exploited, can they be manipulated, could they be a source of support"? Taylor concludes that "these issues may well still be present when people have agreed to participate" in a research exercise.

These challenges were responsible for the first two months of field work being spent on negotiating, confidence building, developing rapport and making constructive contacts with local gatekeepers and key informants, and reaching out to relevant institutional bodies, individuals and groups that could facilitate access to the research sites and potential participants. This was indeed a hectic experience. Borrowing an inference from Taylor (1998:39), the people of the Niger Delta "are not 'social facts' inhabiting the place" and institutions just waiting to be studied and to reveal their problems.

The actual research design journey for the field study began when the main researcher was introduced to Abah Adejo in November 2007. Adejo is a Port Harcourt civil society based consultant. Adejo provided information and suggested that before leaving South Africa for the field work in Nigeria, the main researcher should ask the Head of Department to address an introductory letter to the President of the Port Harcourt chapter of Ahmdu Bello University (ABU) Alumni Association (see appendix: 1 and 2). While in Nigeria, Mr Adejo also advised that the main researcher should get in touch with Mr. Asobinuanwu Womeodu, the alumni officer of the Ahmdu Bello University (ABU) Alumni Association chapter in Zaria, Kaduna state. The main researcher is a tenured academic staff member at the Sociology Department, ABU Zaria. Mr. Asobinuanwu Womeodu had just been posted to Zaria from the Rivers state chapter of ABU Alumni Association. After constructive consultations and interactions with Mr. Asobinuanwu Womeodu, logistics for the field work began to take shape. Mr. Asobinuanwu Womeodu made contacts with his former colleagues at the Port Harcourt branch of ABU Alumni office, after which he took off with the main researcher to Port Harcourt, the Rivers state capital.

While in Port Harcourt, a series of contacts and consultations were made. We were advised to see Engineer Justice Buchi who at that time was in charge of the youth empowerment unit of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Given his official role in NDDC, it was suggested to us that his office have over the years tried on a small scale to intervene on issues affecting young women and girls in the Niger Delta. He was therefore in a better position to provide suggestions and logistics on who we should contact. In the course of our interaction with Engineer Justice Buchi, we discovered that he is a former militant and lieutenant/confidant of Alhaji Mujahid Asari-Dokubo the leader of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) founded in 2004. Justice Buchi also worked as an Engineer with Shell but resigned in 2003. He became a very useful contact and strategist, and provided information on potential participants. Justice Buchi supported and participated throughout the field work. Mr. Abah Adejo also played a key role. We later found that he was a resident consultant on community development issues in the Niger Delta. He too, has had close interaction with the NDDC youth empowerment unit. Mr. Abah Adejo later volunteered to be part of the research team. He also provided material and logistical support as well as the use of his car, some of his staff and office facilities.

After a series of meetings with these individuals, more logistical information was provided on how to get to our target participants, defined as: women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. Engineer Justice Buchi became very useful because he

had been active in all the divides in the oil enclave economy in the Niger Delta. He provided logistics and facilitated contacts with other key informants and helped establish rapport with some relevant community leaders and representatives of militant youths.

Even after we had met with Engineer Justice Buchi and Mr. Abah Adejo, there was no breakthrough because we had not made contact with our target research participants. The situation initially looked hopeless and bleak. At this initial stage, the question of sampling participants was not on the table. This was because there was no single participant that had been identified for interview. The practice of sexual liaison is a purely private affair and is not open to the public. Therefore to break the gates and get into this seemingly hidden phenomenon was initially very difficult. Taylor (1998:35–47) had cautioned that “even when access is granted there is still ‘actual’ entry into the ‘real’ and everyday of the setting”; this may entail the researchers getting behind even “fronts put on for their benefits” by gatekeepers and key informants (Taylor: 1998:38).

Therefore even after access has been granted or obtained, having access to the real research sites, targets and setting implies dealing and negotiating with intricate; sometimes delicate and complex social configurations and manoeuvres orchestrated by elements who may sometimes include gatekeepers and key informants. This is responsible for why negotiating field access is not only complex but “fraught with difficulty” (Taylor: 1998:38). For close to a week, Justice Buchi deployed some of his staff to look and search for clues. The search later bore fruit when Justice Buchi met one Sister Angela Sullivan. A meeting was organised with Sister Sullivan and her associates which include Onyinyechi Okogbue (a grassroots activist) based in Isiokpo Town in Ikwerre LGA in Rivers state, John Umoren (Procurement officer Akwa Ibom state action Committee against AIDS), Ruth Udofia based in Uyo the capital of Akwa Ibom state, Eno Okon and Patrick Okoko all from Ibeno, Ibeno Local Government of Akwa Ibom state.

Sister Sullivan is originally from Eket town in Akwa Ibom state. During the time of field work, she was a permanent resident at Ngbuoshimini, Rumueme Kingdom in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers States. She had four children from three different expatriate oil workers. She considered herself a victim of sexual liaisons because the three expatriates abandoned her with four ‘fatherless’ children. She also helps to accommodate other women and ‘fatherless’ children abandoned by oil expatriate workers. She runs what looks like an informal orphanage house strictly for ‘fatherless’ children abandoned as a result of sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. She also has a massage

consulting outfit for expatriate oil workers. The massage consulting outfit helps to employ some of the abandoned women and support the orphanage she is running.

Sister Sullivan was therefore not only a key informant, but provided the keys that unlocked the face of sexual liaisons in Rivers and Akwa Ibom states. It is important to state that Sister Sullivan is well known in what is called the greater Port Harcourt area. Incidentally, she was the person who recommended that we locate our research sites in the same Local Government Areas. She also recommended the sites in Akwa Ibom state and was responsible for our contacts in Uyo, Eket, Ebono and Oron. After our contact with her, we discovered that she apparently knew who was doing something in relation to the problem and challenges of sexual liaisons. She suggested that traditional rulers have very little information on the phenomenon of sexual liaisons. Before meeting her, we had made visits to some traditional palaces to announce the purpose of our presence in the two states (see Figure 4.1).



**Plate 4.1** Palace of the Apiti of Rumueme Kingdom in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA)

Source: Field Work 2008

She took us to some community leaders who she knew were doing something on the problem of sexual liaisons. She also suggested that we should concentrate on the youths. She specifically recommended that we interview a member of the House of Representatives who was spearheading a campaign for the rights of women abused and abandoned by expatriate oil workers. She recommended the Oron museum as an important site because her group had enjoyed support from the management of the museum and had also held outreach and awareness activities on sexual liaisons at the premises of the Museum. On our behalf, she

made contacts and put across telephone calls to women involved in sexual liaisons, as well as those who had retired. She gave us the names of people to contact. In most cases, she participated and supported us throughout the period of the research.

The emergence of Sister Sullivan provided the route and a direction to the research design. Burman (1998:54) had advised that it is very important to consider the impact of the route by which you contact your participants, in terms of the ways they see you, and “how this may limit the form and content of the accounts you elicit”. Sister Sullivan’s emergence was also important to us because, according to Burman (1998:54), “what your prospective interviewees see the study as being about will also be central to their decision about whether to participate”. Berg (2007:185) argues that once gatekeepers, key informants and research subjects (those he generally refers to as ‘guides and informants’) identify with the research objectives and with the researcher’s conduct in the research setting, they will go all the way to facilitate access and successful completion of the research. He also states that “conversely, if the gatekeeper disapproves of the project or the researcher, or is somehow bypassed, he or she may become an unmovable obstacle: Angry gatekeepers may actively seek to block one’s access or progress” (Berg: 2007:185–186). The foregoing is what Schein (1987) describes in qualitative research methods as “the clinical perspective in fieldwork”. The gatekeepers, key informants or guides, are those he labelled as “living human systems” (Schein: 1987:11).

With respect to the research design of this study, Sister Sullivan was indeed the main gatekeeper and the most valued key informant. This is because some of the women involved in sexual liaisons were very free and eager to divulge information any time she was present. Burman (1998:52–53) states that although the researcher is always in control of the research setting, research is a “collaborative enterprise”. This is the way one of our research assistants captured our first collaborative meeting with Sister Sullivan:

This is a report of the minutes of a brief meeting held on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2008 between Sister Angela Sullivan, Mr. Yohanna Gandu and his research team. The meeting took place at Sister Sullivan’s compound in Ngbuoshimini metropolitan area, Rumueme Kingdom in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The meeting started at about 4:16pm Mr. Gandu asked a series of questions on the problems faced by children who were born with Europeans or foreigners and Nigerian ladies. Angela gave some useful information as to the location of these kids in both Rivers and Akwa Ibom states. She suggested that Mr Gandu and his team visit settlements known as ‘*Aka base*’, and ‘*Gambia*’ in Rumuolumeni-Port-Harcourt, where Saipem Nigeria Limited, Neptune Maritime Nigeria Limited and many other oil servicing companies operate. She told Mr. Gandu that the ‘*Akar base*’ and ‘*Gambia*’ are locations where some Nigerian women are abandoned with ‘fatherless’ children by

expatriate oil workers. Unfortunately, these kids from the white men and their Nigerian mothers are not properly looked after. Some of these kids are suffering and begging for money from strangers for food. Both Sister Angela and Mr. Gandu scheduled a visit to both 'Akar base' and 'Gambia' to meet and interact with these women and their 'fatherless' children. The proposed date for the visit is 28/1/2008 – Monday morning (see plates 4.2 and 4.3).



**Plate 4.2** Main road that cuts through 'Akar base' to oil servicing companies

Source: Field Work 2008

Sister Sullivan raised several questions which bordered on the legality associated with the protection of her associates and the subject of anonymity. She tried to find out if there were going to be legal consequences if her associates participated in this research. She also wanted to know if information obtained from the interviews would be made public. We later found in the course of field work that the questions and observations raised by Sister Sullivan were very relevant because some of our initial prime research subjects did not want to be interviewed because they feared that they would be identified. Their concerns range from the fear of stigma to discrimination associated with sexual liaison in Nigeria. Some of them made it very clear to the main researcher in Port Harcourt that the business of sexual liaison in the Niger Delta is often associated with the phenomenon of human trafficking. Human trafficking is a serious crime in Nigeria. The work of Kvale (1996:119–120) had also cautioned researchers on some of these issues.



**Plate 4.3** Women's housing and living conditions at 'Aka base'

Source: Field Work 2008

Some of the institutions, groups, individuals, gatekeepers, and key informants who facilitated the field interviews, also wanted to influence the shape and content of the final report. Some of them requested that before publishing the research report, a draft copy should be sent to them. Email addresses to which the report was to be sent were forwarded to the main researcher. To do that would have meant “losing critical perspective on knowledge obtained” (Kvale: 1996:120). In the drive to re-enforce the fact that this study is independent research, the main researcher made repeated reference to the contents in the Rhodes University introductory letter of this study that clearly states that the research was absolutely for academic and intellectual consumption and has nothing to do with any political interests (see Appendix 1 and 2). This was the way the researcher, in the words of Kvale (1996:120) tried to “ensure the scientific quality of the study and protect the independence of the research”. Our approach is also in line with Dreyfus and Dreyfus' (1990:237–239) contextual “ethical expertise”, which is a discourse on “ethical coping”, how to “determine under which conditions deliberation and choice” should be made in research, and the “principles that tell us what is right or an ethics based on involvement in a tradition that determines what is good”.

Sister Sullivan practically proved that gatekeepers whether formal or informal, are custodians of a community or groups who possess the sole authority or power to decide when and how researchers can have access to research targets (Hagan: 2006). In the words of Berg (2007:185), gatekeepers or key informants “grant or deny access to a research setting”, because they are “watchdogs who protect the sting, people, or institutions sought as the target of research”. In this study, Sister Sullivan was a social catalyst that facilitated the bargaining processes, provided the road map, stymied and opened the gates for us to gain access to the



research sites. Through out the field work, she constantly came to our assistance and support anytime we had problems in the course of the research. She created a friendly and inviting atmosphere which helped in cultivating voluntary participation of research participants.

Our gatekeepers were therefore not traditional rulers but Justice Buchi, Abah Adejo, Mr. Asobinuanwu Womeodu, Mr. John Umoren, and most especially; Sister Sullivan and her associates. They had the keys that opened the gates for us to interrogate the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. Both Sister Sullivan and Mr. John Umoren also introduced us to other grassroots groups and individuals, such as Mr. Kingsley Chijioke, Community youth leader, an ex militant and at the time of the research leader of a grassroots Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) called *Societal Impact –NGO*. He is well known in Eligbam metropolitan area in Rumueme Kingdom Obio/Akpor Local Government Rivers State. His NGO specialises in rehabilitation therapy for violated women and children amongst his immediate community. He has also worked very closely with Sister Sullivan in rehabilitating women and children abandoned by expatriate workers. His NGO also engages in helping to support other categories of ‘abandoned’ children, such as street and disabled children. He took time off from his tight schedule to be part of the research team. Another person introduced to us who later became a research assistant and an important informant is Ferdinard N. Amachi, an Engineer who works with an oil servicing Company. He is a specialist in Industrial and Human Development. Part of his work includes community engagement. He was recommended to be part of the research team by Sister Sullivan. He took official permission from his place of work to be part of the research team because according to him, “the experience from this research will also benefit my office”. What we later learnt was that his company was interested in the thrust of our research, but would not allow the researcher official access to interview its management on the subject of sexual liaison.

It is important to observe that considerable amount of financial and logistical support came from Engineer Justice Buchi. The main researcher however shouldered most of the financial cost of the field work. Sister Sullivan remained our key informant throughout the field work. Our research assistants therefore included Onyinyechi Okogbue, Ruth Udofia, Eno Okon, Patrick Okoko, Mr. Kingsley Chijioke, Ferdinard N. Amachi and Abah Adejo. They all had some tertiary education and were familiar with the two states of Rivers and Akwa Ibom out research sites. All of them have had some form of classroom training in social and community research and were familiar with the Niger Delta terrain.

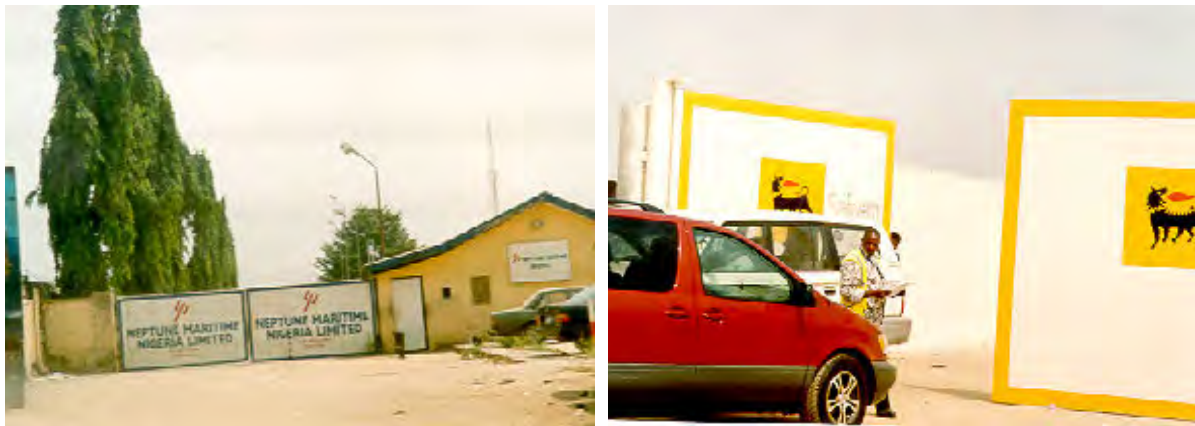
We leveraged Mr. Abah Adejo's consulting outfit and used logistics provided by Justice Buchi's office to organise training for the research assistants on the research objectives and questions to be investigated, and on interviewer behaviour and best practice. Sister Sullivan was on hand to provide practical advice on how to interact with women and children affected by the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in what she referred to as "my constituency". Interviewers were told that they would be working with different ways of interviewing participants and were informed of the necessity to follow prescribed interview logistics. One of the things that cropped up during the training was the initial apprehensiveness about the language to be used for the entire research exercise. With the exception of Abah Adejo, all the research assistants are people who could speak the local language/dialects of our research locations and sites. As soon as we embarked on the exercise, we discovered that our participants had a good working knowledge of the English language even if it intertwined with Pidgin English. Interviews were therefore conducted in English. During the interview sessions, there were rare occasions in which a few participants expressed themselves in Pidgin English. Such expressions were decoded by research assistants proficient in the language.

Data collection and field observations were conducted under strict conditions of anonymity. Before the start of interview or observation sessions, research participants were informed that the exercise would be anonymous, that analysis derived from the findings would be kept anonymous, and conclusions derived from the data analysis would be an accurate estimation of what was observed on the field. Pre-research visits were embarked upon to research sites. Oral informed consent was obtained from potential participants before actual research visits and interviews began. The mode of recording interviews was audio or voice recording. This model ensures the anonymity of participants. With the help of informants like Sullivan, we explained to participants that information collected would not be given or made available to any person, group of persons, or organisations. And that the analysis and final report from the interviews and observations would not reveal the identity of our participants in any form. We also promised to delete from our audio record anything the interviewee does not want to be transcribed or reflected in the final report of this study.

Hence qualitative interview is semi-structured; one of the first challenges of interviewing in qualitative research is the preparation of a rough pre-interview schedule or guide. The interview guide provided topical areas and issues that have been articulated in the research problem. We were open to the fact that each participant was bringing her/his personal perspective and experience into the discussions. Therefore the initial interview guide

provided a general thrust, whereas responses by the individual participant form the basis of further questions and probes. As Burman (1998:54) put it, the objective “here is divergence and variety, rather than convergence and replicability, you may be better able to address your general aims by orienting the questions to the particular position of your participants”.

Therefore, the mapping and selection of research sites and location of respondents for interviews, life histories, focus group discussions and collection of ethnographic artefacts was carefully conducted with tacit support and direction by gatekeepers, key informants and active youths who lived in the selected areas. Before final confirmation of each mapped research site, the research team and key informants made reconnaissance observational visits to ascertain or confirm the authenticity of such participants to provide answers to the research questions.



**Plate 4.4** Neptune and Saipem: two oil servicing companies that denied access to the research team.

Source: Field Work 2008

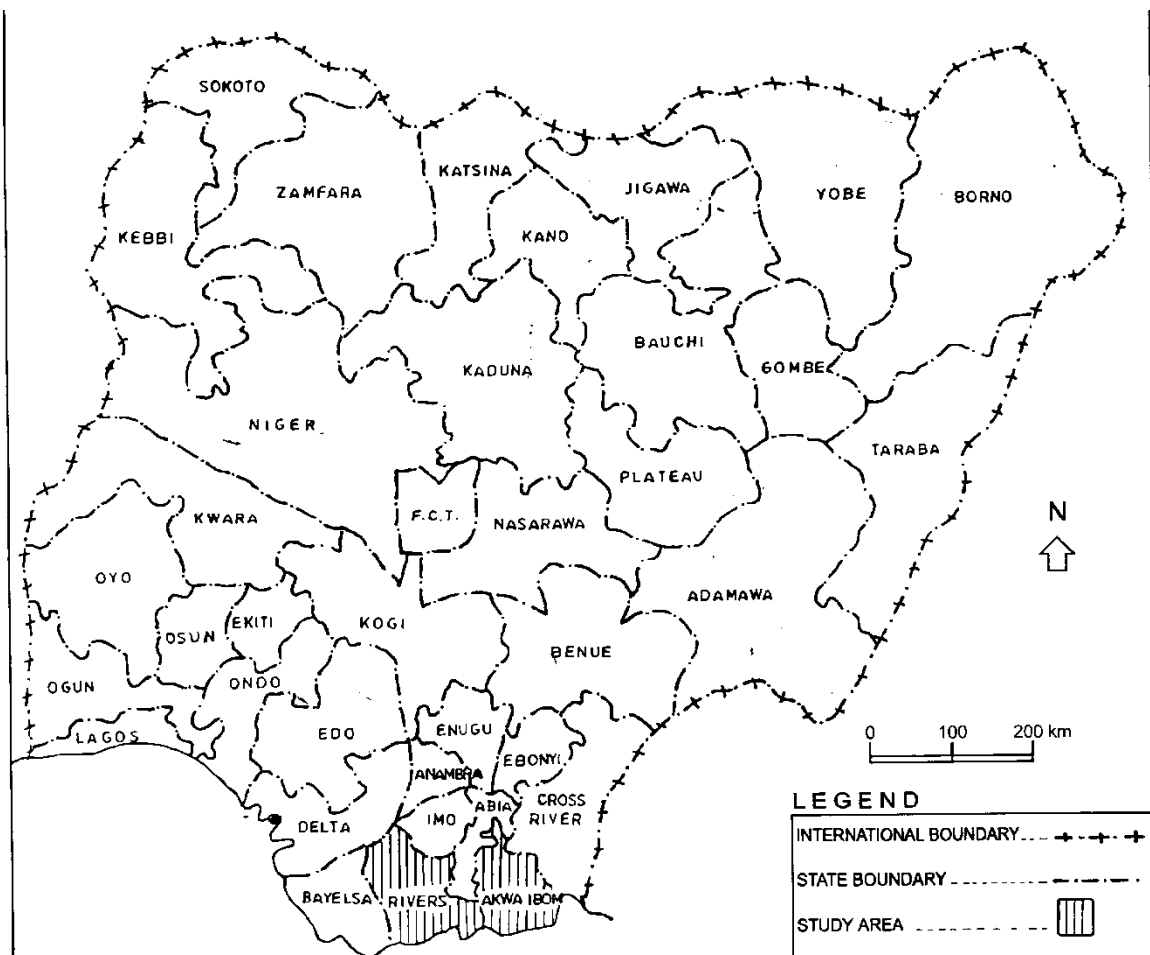
Unsuccessful attempts were made to interact with expatriate male oil company workers and management staff of major oil companies and oil servicing companies located in the study sites. Our objective was to provide us with the other side of the story. This was not to be. We submitted the introductory letter from Rhodes University (see appendix: 2) to these companies, made several visits, but we were told that management did not approve our application for the interview requested. We were not allowed to go beyond the gates of these oil companies and oil servicing companies located in both Rivers and Akwa Ibom states.

Apparently we were not the first to be denied access to the premises of oil TNCs in the Niger Delta. A United States nongovernmental group suffered a similar fate in 1999. This is the way Clark (et al.: 1999:3) captured their frustration: “During our visits, we met with community residents, leaders of community groups, and state and local government officials. Despite efforts to arrange meetings with representatives of the oil companies, we were only

granted one meeting with a representative of Shell". Visits were made to the offices of the Nigerian immigration authority, located in the two states to intimate them on the phenomenon under investigation. We were granted only one interview session in each of the two states. Our interviewees were all representatives of the Public Relations unit of the Immigration Department.

#### **4.3 STUDY LOCATIONS IN THE NIGER DELTA:**

This section describes the study locations and the mapping of research sites in the Niger Delta. Our fieldwork research activities were carried out in sites located in two purposively chosen states out of the nine states of the Niger Delta area. These states are Rivers and Akwa Ibom (See figures 4.1 and 4.2). While Rivers State is the most urbanised oil producing state in the Niger delta, Akwa Ibom is sparsely semi-urban and predominantly rural.



**MAP OF NIGERIA SHOWING THE STUDY STATES**

**Figure 4.1** Map of Nigeria showing the study states of Rivers and Akwa Ibom

Rivers and Akwa-Ibom states were purposively chosen on the advice of our key informant who was in a position to open the gates for the researcher to interact with the target participants. The two states therefore provide the best setting in the Niger Delta area where our research questions can best be investigated and answered.

Rivers and Akwa Ibom states (see Figure 4.2) are located in the heart of the Niger Delta. Locating our research sites in the two states gives us an added advantage. In the first place, these states housed the largest oil production sites in the Niger Delta region. Secondly, violent militant conflict that engulfed the Niger Delta between 1997 and 2003 was not only more pronounced in Warri, Delta state, but “led to a massive loss of lives and property and crippled economic activities in Warri, leading many oil industry servicing companies to relocate to Port Harcourt” (Ukiwo: 2007:598–599). Since then, Rivers state has always been a dominant player in housing expatriate oil workers.

In our intentional selection of the two states and mapping of respective research sites, some objective criteria and procedures were followed. Doing qualitative research, we were not just conscious of the requirement to be multi-dimensional in our data collection methods, but we also adopted what Akpan (2005:83) describes as a “multi-site model of data collection”. According to him, this is “in keeping with a widely accepted qualitative research principle that besides increasing the generalisability of findings, such a model further assures the researcher that the phenomena observed in one given setting ‘are not wholly idiosyncratic’”. Paraphrasing Adelma (1977), Taylor (1998:37) acknowledges the wisdom in combining a multi-method data collection approach with a multi-site model, because as an ethnographic study, such an approach “recognises the complexity and embeddedness of social truths” as well as synchronises any “discrepancies or conflicts” in data obtain from various respondents. Again making reference to Adelma (1977), Taylor argues that given the “complexity of ‘social truths’”, the multi-method paradigm approach in ethnography “gives the advantage of being able to develop converging lines of enquiry” (Taylor: 1998:37).

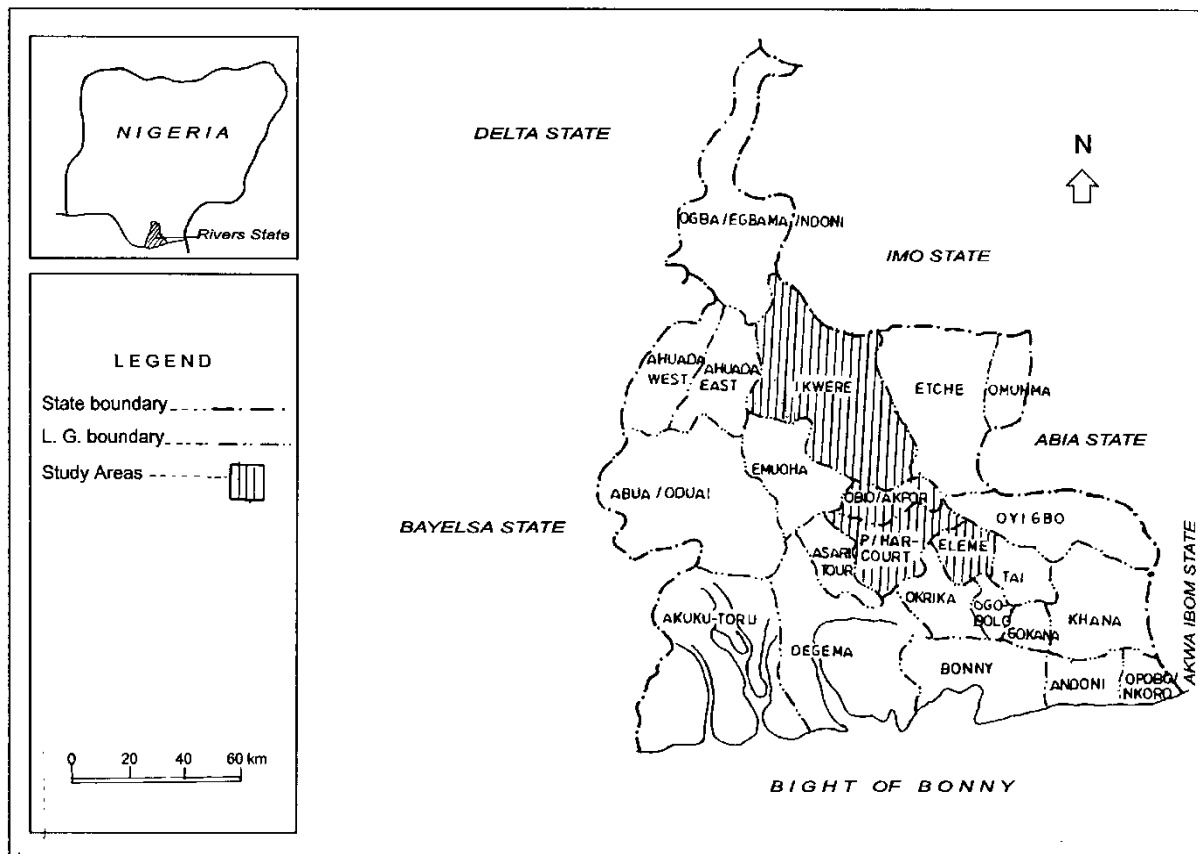
#### **(a) Research Sites in Rivers State**

One of Nigeria's 36 States, the Rivers State was created from the then Eastern Region of Nigeria by Decree No. 19 of 1967. Rivers State has 23 Local Government Areas (see Figure 4.2). Prior to her creation in 1967, the area was known as “Oil Rivers Protectorate”.<sup>30</sup> This name has its origins from central role played by the territory “in the oil trades of the last

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<sup>30</sup>See River state Government, “Our Profile”, RiversState.gov.ng, accessed on 05/24/10, at: <http://www.riversstate.gov.ng/OurProfile/tabid/100/Default.aspx>

two centuries”,<sup>31</sup> beginning first with early palm oil trade with Europe and North America and later crude oil in the 1950s. Rivers state is adduced to be “the heart of the hydro-carbon industry, responsible for a huge chunk of the nation's foreign exchange earnings”<sup>32</sup>. Akpan (2005:84) describes Rivers State as “the nerve-centre of Nigeria’s oil economy”, and “Nigeria’s second most industrialised state (after Lagos)”.



RIVERS STATE SHOWING THE STUDY AREAS

**Figure 4.2** Map of Rivers State showing study sites or local government areas

The Rivers state government claims that the state accounts “for over 48% of crude oil produced on-shore in the country and 100% of the liquefied natural gas that Nigeria is currently exporting to several countries of the world”<sup>33</sup>. It is important to regard these figures as claims because there is a dearth of official statistics on oil activities in the country. Officially statistics usually paraded are mere projections and relatively un-reliable. Our observations do no in anyway take away the fact that Rivers state is not only a strategic oil

<sup>31</sup>Ibid

<sup>32</sup>Ibid

<sup>33</sup>Ibid

enclave economy in Nigeria, but her importance to the larger Nigerian economy and society earned her the name “Treasure Base of the Nation”.<sup>34</sup>

The Rivers state government describes Port Harcourt, the state capital, as “the Garden City, because of its beautiful layout and decent environment,” and the fact that “Port Harcourt is indeed one of the fastest growing metropolitan cities in Africa”<sup>35</sup>. Besides housing the Shell-operated crude oil export terminal (at Bonny), Nigeria’s second largest seaport and a container port (Akpan: 2005:84), Rivers state has four degree-awarding institutions, two petroleum refineries, a petro-chemical plant, fertiliser plant and a liquefied natural gas plant all located in the greater Port Harcourt urban area. Port Harcourt marks the eastern terminal of Nigeria's railway system and housed Nigeria's second busiest seaport after Lagos. With a busy International airport and busy regular local and international flights to all parts of the country and major cities of the world, Port Harcourt is indeed a cosmopolitan city<sup>36</sup>.

Figure 4.3 indicates that our research sites in Rivers state were located in Port Harcourt city, Obio/Apkor, Ikwere, and Eleme Local Government Areas (LGAs). These LGAs are part and parcel of what is regarded as the greater Port Harcourt urban city ‘*Oil radius*’, which enables complex and multiple sexual networks that facilitate sexual liaisons as attractive options. Locating the study in the greater *Port Harcourt urban* gives us the advantage of collecting data from a relatively urban setting to complement data from sites in Akwa Ibom state, which is semi-urban and in a largely rural setting.

### **(b) Research Sites in Akwa Ibom State**

Akwa Ibom is therefore one of the nine Niger Delta states in the South-South political region of Nigeria. The state was created out of the then Cross River State on September 23rd, 1987 by the Federal Military Government of General Ibrahim Babangida. Cross River state itself came into existence in 1976 from the old South Eastern State, which itself was created among the 12 states created by General Gowon in 1967<sup>37</sup> from the then four regions of Nigeria. The last state creation exercise took place on 1st October 1996 and 6 new states were created<sup>38</sup> bringing the total number to 36 states (Alapiki: 2005:54–62).

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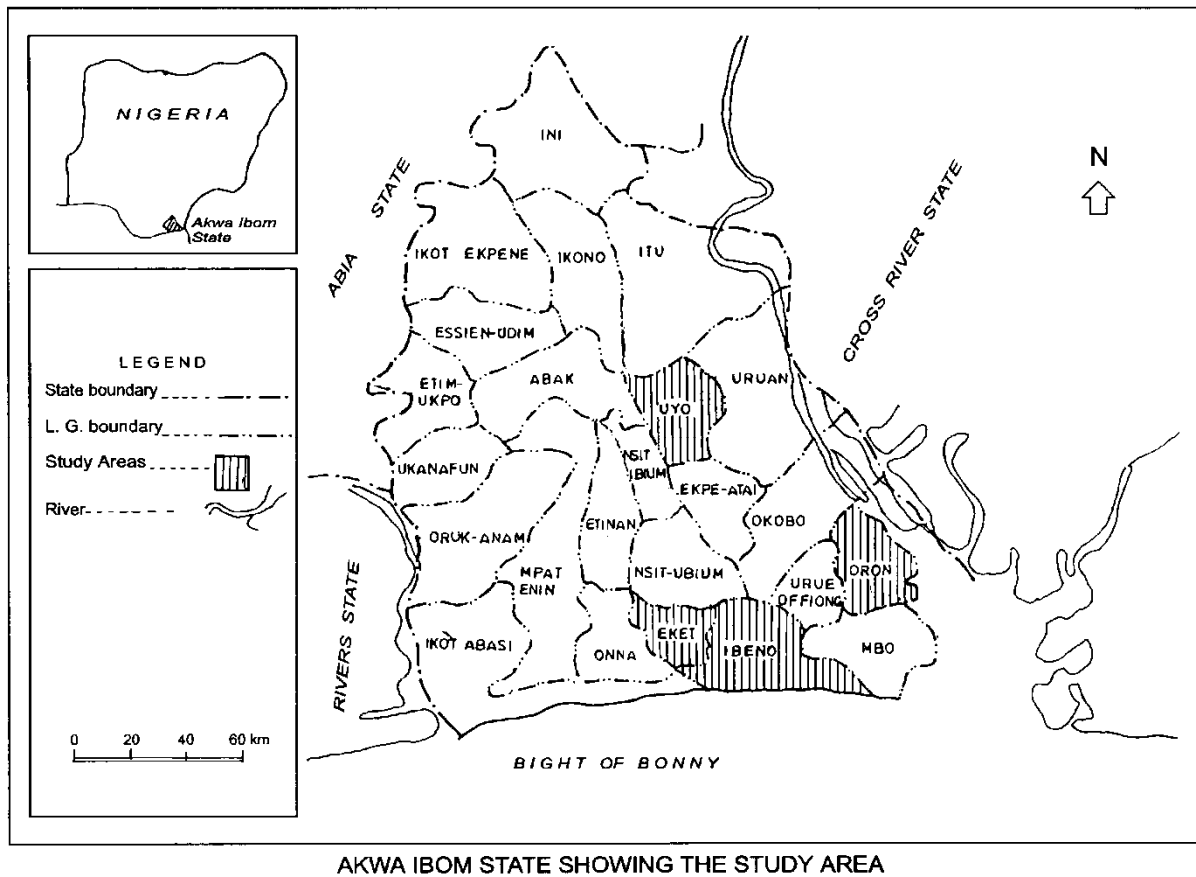
<sup>34</sup>Ibid

<sup>35</sup>Ibid

<sup>36</sup>See River state Government, “Our People”, RiversState.gov.ng, accessed on 05/24/10, at: <http://www.riversstate.gov.ng/OurPeople/tabid/101/Default.aspx>

<sup>37</sup>See Gowon's broadcast to the nation - May 27, 1967: Gowon's Broadcast to the Nation, dividing Nigeria into Twelve States, accessed at: <http://www.dawodu.com/gowon.htm>, on: 17/02/2010

<sup>38</sup>See “Nigeria States”, accessed at: [http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Nigeria\\_federal\\_states.htm](http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Nigeria_federal_states.htm), on: 17/02/2010



**Figure 4.3** Map of Akwa Ibom State showing study sites or local government areas

State creation is not the immediate concern of this study. Similarly, the debate over the fact that primordial factors have been the driving force for state creation in Nigeria is also not the focus of this study. While we acknowledge Alapiki's (2005:49) concerns that "the fissiparous tendencies bearing on the Nigerian national polity make the policy of using state creation to achieve national integration a failed strategy", and that "the outcomes of state creation exercises in Nigeria have failed to assuage the very forces that instigate new state demands", our focus here is merely to locate Akwa Ibom state within the history of its creation as a state in Nigeria.

As Figure 4.3 indicates, the specific research sites or Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Akwa Ibom state include Uyo (the capital city), Eket, Ibena and Oron. Akwa Ibom state is located between latitudes 4° 32' and 5°33' North, and longitudes 7°25' and 8°25' East. The state shares boundaries with Cross River state to the East, Rivers and Abia states to the West and the Atlantic Ocean to the South. With the capital city at Uyo, Akwa Ibom state is made up of what the state government regards as "a homogenous group of people believed to have originated from a single ancestral stock", because the "languages spoken in the state are



closely related”<sup>39</sup>. The inhabitants of the state are Ibibio, Oron, Annang, Ibeno and Eket peoples; languages spoken in the state also go with the same names include the Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Eket and Ibeno. In terms of population size, the Ibibio are the largest group. Annang; which is the second largest group, speak a dialect that is very similar to the Ibibio language. The next groups are Ibeno and Eket who speak similar dialects. These two groups share the Atlantic Ocean border with beautiful beaches. This is the way State government describes the economy of Akwa Ibom state:

Akwa Ibom state is a predominantly civil service state with the government being the major engine of growth. The people are mainly farmers and fishermen in the riverine areas. Akwa Ibom is a major oil producing state, with most of the oilfields located offshore Ibeno. The government has made attempts to diversify the state economy along the lines of mechanised agriculture, tourism and IT. These are typified by the Ibeno Rice, IT parks initiatives, and the 5-star Ibeno Meridien Hotel and Resort, and world class golf course<sup>40</sup>.



**Plate 4.5** Ibeno Beach welcome sign post

Source: Field work 2008

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<sup>39</sup>See NigeriaGalleria.com (2004): “Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria: Nigeria Information Guide” at: [http://www.nigeriagalleria.com/Nigeria/States\\_Nigeria/Akwa\\_Ibom\\_State.html](http://www.nigeriagalleria.com/Nigeria/States_Nigeria/Akwa_Ibom_State.html)

<sup>40</sup>Ibid



**Plate 4.6** Ibeno Beach welcome sign post placed at the entrance route into Ibeno Town

Source: Field Work 2008

In terms of religious orientation, the people of Akwa Ibom state are predominantly Christian. As in most parts of Nigeria, some people who go to church also engage in some native African religious practices. Akwa Ibom is not an exception. The dominant Church denomination in the state is Qua Iboe Church. This church celebrated its centenary (1887–1987) anniversary in 1987 (see figures 4.7 and 4.8). It is pertinent to note that the celebrations for this centenary anniversary of this dominant Church in Akwa Ibom state were still continuing at the time we conducted our field study in 2007/2008.

During our field research, we discovered that massive renovation of major Qua Iboe Church branches were being undertaken by the ExxonMobil-operating Qua Iboe Terminal at Eket and Ibeno. We sought for and were given official permission by site construction workers to take pictures of on-going Church renovation activities in both Eket and Ibeno. The ethnographic relevance of these pictures, as well as the sociological importance of the Church renovation exercise carried out by ExxonMobil to this study, is discussed in greater detail in the analysis chapters.

Oilfields in Akwa Ibom state are located offshore. Since late 2003, the state has been “Nigeria’s second largest oil-producing state” (Akpan: 2005:84). Major Oil Transnational Corporations actively operating in the upstream oil sector of Akwa Ibom state are ExxonMobil, Shell and Total. The ExxonMobil-operated Qua Iboe Terminal at Eket is one of Nigeria’s oil export terminals located in Akwa Ibom.

#### **4.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

Taylor's (1998:37) assertion that research techniques "have to be chosen" in such a way that they fit "the purpose of the enquiry", informed our decision to adopt two broad methods of data collection techniques in this study. These are (i) secondary, desktop or documentary sources and (ii) primary qualitative methods of data collection techniques. Yin (1994) advocates that even in case study researches, a multi-method approach should be adopted because of the potential for findings emanating from collaborated research approaches to be relatively more accurate, trustworthy and convincing than otherwise. The primary qualitative methods of data collection include In-depth Interviews (IDIs – lived experiences and case histories), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Ethnographic methods of observation and Photographic still images or Visual sociology.

##### **Secondary, Desktop or Documentary Sources of data**

A proper interrogation of the phenomenon under investigation requires that attention be paid to the historical forces and development trends of the Nigerian oil enclave economy. Owing to the fact that a vast literature exists on the problem under investigation comprising official Nigerian documents, publications by international organisations, newspapers, magazines, journals, seminar papers and topical articles related to the Nigerian oil economy, the environment and OBCs, substantial sources of data are available as reviewed in the background chapters of this study.

##### **Primary Sources of data**

In addition to the documentary sources, unstructured interview sessions conducted between November 1997 and May 2008 constituted another major source of data collection technique. The questions were open ended. Dillman (et al.: 1976:75–76) found that any form of prior introductory letter from the interviewer to respondents "can crucially affect refusal rates". Evidence from results of their study suggests that "the letter did make a difference" as it would "improve response to telephone interviews". In an effort to prevent or significantly reduce refusal rates, introductory letters were written to sensitise participants on the objective of research; they stressed the social importance of the research, promised participants absolute anonymity, explained and convinced them that their participation is essential to the study. This approach was responsible for the successful low level of refusals recorded in both the face-to-face and the telephone interviews.

A good field interview performance is measured or usually assessed by many variables which include examining the differential length of the interview, the number of contacts and frequency of contacts or follow up required, suitable times for interviewing, respondent preferences for interview strategy, and interviewer effects. Given the insecurity risk in the Niger Delta, and that our research is community based, we did not have the luxury of a lengthy stay in the region. The timing of the period of our field research greatly facilitated our relative success. Besides being a dry season, the period from November 2007 to May 2008, was relatively peaceful as there were no major incidents of violence or kidnapping of foreign oil workers. Our field work research activities began in November and concluded in May 2008. With the bad road network in the Niger Delta, this timing also meant that we were able to complete the field research before the rainy season could set in fully. Given the remote nature of the road network in the Niger Delta region, our movement would have been restricted if we had extended the research into the rainy season.

#### **Individual In-depth Interviews:**

An interview inquiry is a moral enterprise: The personal interaction in the interview affects the interviewee, and the knowledge produced by the interview affects our understanding of the human situation... Explicit rules or clear solutions to ethical problems that may arise during an interview study can hardly be provided, but contexts will be suggested for the researcher's reflection on the normative and value themes involved.

(Kvale: 1938:109)

There is always a purpose for every research interview, and the purpose can easily be located in the research objectives and questions that are articulated prior to the actual interview exercise. In what he regards as "guidelines for good practice" in face-to-face qualitative research "interviewing", Burman (1998:49) warned that due to the "diverse and specific nature of interviews", there is no short hand or "blueprint of interviewing practice or analysis" that can be determined with absolute certainty "in advance and in abstraction from the topic and context of a particular inquiry". Rather, there are general principles, rules, and issues that "need to be addressed when designing, conducting and analysing interview-based research".

Burman (1998:50–51) identifies four main reasons for conducting interviews in qualitative research. First, unstructured or semi-structured qualitative research interviews can help to elicit the un-scaled subjective opinions, meanings or answers that research subjects

give to research questions that are being investigated. Second, qualitative “interviews can permit exploration of issues that may be too complex to investigate through quantitative means”. This is because the researcher is not bound by specific codes or standardised format of conducting interviews, and interview questions can easily be tailored “to the position and comments” of the interviewee. Qualitative interviews are therefore “more open and flexible research tools” that “can document perspectives not usually represented” or “even envisaged by researchers”.

Third, the interview exercise gives the researcher opportunity to get firsthand knowledge on the research problem. Burman (1998:51) states that this is because conducting qualitative interviews “demands consideration of reflexivity in the research process, extending from the devising of the research question, to identifying and setting up interviews with informants, to the interview itself”. Other aspects have to do with the role of the researcher, how the interviewee perceives the researcher, reflection of the researcher on the entire interview process, and the entire effort put in place by the researcher to piece together the interview outcome in the form of a written research report.

The fourth reason is associated with what Burman (1998:51) regards as the “question of power relations in research” and how the researcher makes the product of his/her research work visible. He states that power relations in research are largely determined by the person or persons “whose purpose the conversation is pursuing”. Within the research setup, interview objectives and questions are therefore usually framed and conducted within power relations in which the researcher is in control. Similarly the power of final selection of key informants, research subjects, interviewees, or target participants rests on the decision of the researcher. Burman (1998:52) argues that due to disequilibrium of power relations in favour of the researcher, it requires that the researcher conducts “prior identification and structuring of themes to be investigated” in interviews.

In this study, a total of 173 individual in-depth interviews were conducted with women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate men, or women who knew, or had friends or relations that have had sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. The distribution in terms of sites and location shows that 8 women were interviewed at the Ngbuoshimini metropolitan area, of Rumueme Kingdom in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State; 8 from Eligbam metropolitan area in Rumueme Kingdom Obio/Akpor Local Government Rivers State; 14 from ‘*Aka base*’, and 9 from ‘*Gambia*’ in Rumuolumini metropolitan area of Port-Harcourt. At ‘*Aka base*,’ 6 children otherwise known as ‘fatherless’ aged 10–16 also participated in the individual in-depth interview exercise. An additional 7 women were

interviewed in Mgbu-Community in Rumuolumini-Port-Harcourt. At Isiokpo Town in Ikwerre LGA in Rivers state, we interviewed 9 women. At Onne in Eleme LGA, we were able to interview 8 women. Therefore, in Rivers state alone, we had a total of 59 in-depth interviews with women. Only 6 'fatherless' children were interviewed.

In Akwa Ibom state, in-depth-interviews were also conducted with women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers, and women who have friends, relations or friends that have had sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. In Uyo, the capital of Akwa Ibom state, we had in-depth interviews with 6 women and in-depth interviews with 3 'fatherless' children. At Atabong in Eket town, the home local government of Sister Sullivan, we had 10 in-depth interviews with women and 9 with 'fatherless' children. At the premises of the National Museum in Oron in Akwa Ibom state, we had 9 in-depth interviews with women and 4 with 'fatherless' Children. At Upenekang and Mkpanak towns, which are all in Ibeno Local Government Area (LGA) of Akwa Ibom state, we conducted 10 and 13 interviews with women respectively. In these two towns, we also conducted 6 interviews with 'fatherless' children who were within the ages of 10 and 14.

In the process of organising the logistics for these interviews we discovered that the Qua Iboe Church in Ibeno had embarked on church renovation exercises which were funded by Exxon-Mobil. The main researcher approached the construction workers at a church site performing renovation works on the main headquarters of the Qua Iboe church and Tower at Mkpanak-Ebeno, in Ebeno Local Government Area (LGA). We inquired from the construction workers if we could talk to them or ask some questions. We were told that the person that could respond to our inquiries was attending a meeting at another branch of the church. We were advised to place an official request for interaction with the appropriate leadership of the church; which we promptly did. We left a copy of a Rhodes University introductory letter with the construction workers. Our letter was to be forwarded to the appropriate church authority. We also left behind a telephone number through which we could be contacted.

Before we left the church premises, we politely asked for permission to take live pictures of the on-going renovation activities. Our request was promptly turned down by construction workers on the grounds that they did not have such a mandate from their contractors. Some of the construction workers on the ground floor of the church premises seized the camera from our camera woman. They insinuated that we had secretly taken some pictures without their permission. We assured them that no pictures had been taken. We handed the camera to them. Being a digital camera, our camera was checked; no pictures of

the church premises were found. The camera was returned to us. We were told to write formally to the church authorities to request permission to take pictures. The problem we had with this condition was that if we had to wait for formal permission before we could take pictures, it would be too late to obtain pictures of workers in action. Renovation and reconstruction work was already at an advanced stage and would soon be complete. If we were to take pictures, this would be the time.

After consulting with some senior members of the administrative staff present at the church premises, a telephone call was made to some church leaders, and clearance was received. We were allowed to take photographs on condition that we would give copies to the church. We gladly complied. We got the pictures taken. We printed and delivered copies to the church the next day at the construction site (see figures). A week later, we received a call notifying us that a date and time has been fixed for our earlier request for an interview session with church elders and leadership. Surprisingly, among the elders, there were representatives of Exxon-Mobil. We attempted to use the leverage of their presence in the church to seek audience with Mobile-Exxon. It was not granted. We made several visits and deposited a copy of Rhodes University introductory letter at the gate, but to no avail. Not a single oil company or oil servicing company agreed to speak with the research team.

We however conducted individual in-depth interviews with church elders (both women and men) and youths (females and males) in Ebeno. We wanted get a feeling of the thinking of these categories of people on the phenomenon of sexual liaisons, its effects on society and the possible measures that should be put in place to ameliorate the problem. The distribution was 5 women church elders, 3 men church elders, 5 female youth leaders and 3 male youth leaders, making a total of 16 in-depth interviews conducted with the Qua Ibo Church in Ibeno.

Across the two states of Rivers and Akwa Ibom states, 8 in-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected women community leaders, 8 with men community leaders, 10 with male youth leaders and 15 with female youth leaders. The criterion used in selecting those to be interviewed was any person who had had prior information or interaction with women or girls involved in sexual liaisons and who were ready to be interviewed. In addition, any church member who had had contact with issues dealing with the rehabilitation of such women or their 'fatherless' children also made the list of individual in-depth interviewees.

### **Focus Group Discussions:**

Focus Groups were formed on the basis of information obtained through key informants. Groups were segregated by gender and many other relevant considerations. The main objective of our FGDs was to identify and describe the common and shared opinions by people of the Niger Delta on the subject under investigation. In other words, from the perspectives of OBCs themselves; the FGDs helped us to uncover, describe and identify similarities and differences in the perception and understanding of the issues captured in the research problems and research questions. The FGDs also yielded valuable information on trends in the challenges posed to the Niger Delta by the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and how it affects individuals involved, family system, and community sociocultural livelihood systems as well as security as perceived by those who participated.

Given that the FGDs were conducted after the in-depth interviews, the main researcher knew what aspects of the research required more information. The first aspect that we needed to focus on in the FGDs was the impact of sexual liaisons on community. The second was the extent to which sexual liaisons serve as a source of youth resistance, conflict and violence. The FGDs were flexible in time and structure and were guided by topical issues. Each participant was therefore free to air their understanding of issues raised.

It should be pointed out that given the private nature of the issues under investigation in this study, focus FGDs were not appropriate for women involved in sexual liaisons. The sensitivity of the subject of investigation and the need to counter balance that with anonymity, the women who had in one way or another been involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers requested to be exempted from the FGDs. Issues of sexual liaisons are private issues and we understood and respected their concerns. Participants in the Focus Group Discussions were drawn from amongst representatives of community leaders (women and men), youths/representatives of militant groups, some religious groups, women and men who had primary information and knowledge about the activities of women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil company workers. We employed Stewart and Shamdasani's (1990:53–57) general techniques and principles of convenience sampling in the conduct of FGDs.

Justice Buchi, Sister Sullivan, Mr. John Umoren, Onyinyechi Okogbue, Ruth Udofia, Eno Okon, Patrick Okoko, Mr. Kingsley Chijioke, Ferdinand N. Amachi and Abah Adejo all played a crucial role in the composition of FGDs. In choosing participants for community leader FGDs (men and women), several factors including age, expediency, the extent to



which a person has been active on issues that affect youths, women and children in the past were considered. Active involvement in community development issues was also a criterion.

The conduct of community leaders (women and men groups) across the research sites shows that 7 women and 5 men participated respectively at the Ngbuoshimini metropolitan area of Rumueme Kingdom in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State. For Eligbam metropolitan area in Rumueme Kingdom Obio/Akpor Local Government Rivers State, we had 8 women and 6 men. At 'Aka base', and 'Gambia' in Rumuolumini metropolitan area of Port-Harcourt, we had 9 women and 5 men respectively. At Isiokpo Town in Ikwerre LGA in Rivers state, one FGD each was conducted for women and men community leaders. We had 7 women and 5 men in attendance. With respect to Onne in Eleme LGA area of Rivers state, there was only one FGD for women community leaders and none for the men. The last FGD was conducted in Onne. By this time our resources were already depleted.

In Akwa Ibom state, Uyo the capital city had one FGD each for women and men community leaders with 9 women and 7 men in attendance respectively. Mr. John Umoren, the procurement officer of the Akwa Ibom state Action Committee on HIV/AIDS provided logistical support for all the FGDs conducted in Uyo and Oron. We also had one FGD each for community leaders at Atabong in Eket town. In attendance at Atabong were 10 women and 9 men respectively. At the premises of the National Museum in Oron in Akwa Ibom state, we had 9 women and 6 men who respectively attended the community leaders FGDs. We had 10 women and 8 men in the two respective FGDs that were conducted at Upenekang in Ibeno. We repeated the same thing at Mkpanak town in Ibeno, where 9 women and 7 men appeared respectively. We also conducted one FGD each for Qua Ibo Church in Ibeno for women church elders with 9 in attendance, men church elders with 5 in attendance, female church youths with 10 in attendance, and male church youths with 7 in attendance.

Across the two states we conducted four FGDs for female youths/representatives of militant groups. 10 female youths and militant representatives were at the Women FGD held at Mgbu-Community in Rumuolumini-Port-Harcourt. For Ngbuoshimini metropolitan area there were 8 female youths and militant representatives. For the other two FGDs for female youths/representatives of militant groups, one was held Oron with 8 women and the second at Atabong in Eket with 10 female youths in attendance. Three FGDs for male youths/representatives of militant groups were conducted in Mgbu-Odohia Community (Rumuolumini- Port-Harcourt) with 9 youths, Ngbuoshimini metropolitan area had 10 youths

in attendance. The third FGD for male youths and militant representatives took place in Ibeno with 10 youths in attendance.



**Plate 4.7** Signpost of welcome into Mgbu-Odohia Community (Rumuolumini- Port-Harcourt)

Source: Field Work 2008

### **Doing Ethnographic methods of observations:**

Ethnography is regarded as a “new paradigm research”; its roots are traceable to anthropology and sociology (Taylor: 1998:34–35). He describes ethnography as “the original and quintessential qualitative research”. Bronislaw Malinowski is one of the earliest anthropologists to employ ethnography as a research method. Malinowski’s (1932) book; *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, which is a product his prolonged fieldwork among the Trobriand Islanders, vividly demonstrated how and why he adopted an ethnographic method of research. Darnell (1974, 1977) and Kuper (1973) provide some relatively more detailed commentaries on Malinowski’s work. Before Malinowski, anthropologists had collected volumes of material from non Western cultures and societies all around the world. However, despite this vast collection of material, very little of it made any sense to Western observers. The social and cultural practices in non Western societies were regarded as ‘strange and primitive’ by Western Scholarship. What made Malinowski’s work stand out among others was the fact that he was “the first anthropologist to adopt the ethnographic research method” (Harvey and Myers: 1995:17–18) in integrated fieldwork to study the Trobriand Islanders.

Prior to Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, there had been considerable anthropological studies conducted by Western scholarship especially *The Golden Bough* by Frazer (1935). James George Frazer’s (1935) twelve volumes of *The Golden Bough* were first published in 1890. These volumes represent one of the earliest encyclopaedic collections of various cultures and cultural practices from all over the world. In these volumes, Frazer obtained voluminous data and materials on non Western cultures and societies around the

world. These enormous data obtained by early Western anthropological research could not however be regarded as ethnographic studies; due to their Eurocentric thrust and the absence of ethnographic research techniques. The 'context' under which such data were collected was ignored and not accorded any significance. What was then obtained was 'blind' comparison of Western cultural practices with other practices from the rest of the world. Western culture was considered as the standard while other cultural practices were standard deviations.

Pre-Malinowski, anthropological researches did not consider context relevant, which explains why such studies took non Western cultural practices out of context. When a cultural practice is placed outside its context, it automatically becomes out of place, and appears foreign or strange. This in part explains why Harvey and Myers (1995:18) lament that despite a vast collection of information on non Western material cultures by *The Golden Bough*, "very little of it made any sense to Western observers". The reason is simply because, "the social and cultural practices in other cultures seemed strange and 'primitive', if not frightening" to the West. They also averred that in those days, "an anthropologist would typically document a particular cultural practice (for example sorcery), and then try to explain it by comparison with other practices of the same kind in other cultures".

Harvey and Myers (1995:18) observe that as Malinowski's pioneer ethnographic research method of intensive fieldwork became established as the acceptable and dominant scientific technique of data collection, "anthropologists coined the term 'ethnocentrism' to refer to the tendency of people in most cultures to think of their own culture as the best and most sensible". The opposite of 'ethnocentrism' is what Harvey and Myers (1995:18) refer to as "a good ethnography" which they define as: "one which 'sensitized' the reader to the beliefs, values, and practices of the natives in another society". They also add that "if, after reading the ethnography, actions which were previously seen as absurd, strange or irrational 'made sense', then that ethnography had achieved its purpose."

It is within the foregoing that Taylor (1998:34) describes ethnography as "crucially a multi-method form of research" and "concern with experience as it is lived, felt or undergone, and thus involves a concern with phenomenological consciousness". According to Taylor (1998:34–35), to do ethnographic research, "the ethnographer participates in people's daily lives for a period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, studying documents, in other words collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issue(s) with which the research is concerned". This explains why he submits that ethnography "is crucially a multi-method form of research" in which "observation, in particular" is on the front burner and "interviewing and action research" are later stages.

The first ethnographic step the main researcher took was to search for key informants who have either lived with or had some form of interaction with our target population. This was the drive that took us to Adejo, then to Justice Buchi and later, Sister Sullivan. Initially the journey was very difficult. It was like we were in a wilderness. It is impossible to conduct ethnographic research observations without living among the research subjects. During the time the main researcher took residence with Abah Adejo, we exhaustively discussed what the research was all about and the kind of participants needed. The decision to contact Justice Buchi was the result of our constant permutations with Adejo. But by the time we met key informant Sullivan, the main researcher again took residence very close to her orphanage compound. This was a step that made it possible for everyday interaction with our potential target participants who visit on a daily basis.

There are therefore three locations in which ethnographic research strategies were very useful. These three research sites included the main researcher's initial daily presence at Sister Sullivan's orphanage compound, attending church services at the Qua Ibeno church and interacting with the congregation in informal activities, and our interaction with the National Museum at Oron.

In recognition of the foregoing, the main researcher spent a great deal of time at the orphanage compound of Sister Sullivan, especially in the early weeks of the research. Daily visits to the compound enabled face to face contact with recent victims of sexual liaisons. I discovered that Sister Sullivan's place was always the first point of call for such women and children in distress. My daily visits and interaction with the compound enabled me to listen to the daily challenges and stories of women involved in sexual liaisons with oil workers. The stories were naturally told in normal or ordinary conversation. With time, I was seen as sympathiser and an NGO man who can help provide support and if possible a link to government and policy makers to help introduce laws that would compel oil companies to pay child support to abandoned mothers and their 'fatherless' children. I was seen by some of the women victims as a human rights advocate. Therefore, the main researcher became part and parcel of the compound to the extent that it served as the main coordinating centre for the research. This may in part acknowledge that the ethnographic research method "puts emphasis on the research having closeness to how people actually conduct their lives" (Taylor: 1998:36-37).

Malinowski (1932:6) himself acknowledges that "indeed, in my first piece of ethnographic research on the South Coast, it was not until I was alone in the district that I began to make some headway; and, at any rate, I found where lay the secret of effective field-

work". Malinowski recommends that ethnographers should use "patient and systematic application of a number of rules of common sense and well known scientific principles". He was strongly against what he refers to as "short-cut leading to the desired results without effort or trouble". To avoid short-cuts as advised by Malinowski, the long presence of the main researcher at the orphanage offered a good opportunity to interact in a normal ordinary day-to-day basis with some of the potential target research participants who, in the final analysis, we were not able to contact again.

Although not all the women we found at the orphanage actively participated in an interview session, the main researcher listened to their personalised conversations and complaints about their problems or how their expatriate sexual liaison partners are maltreating them. Some also talked about their plans and strategies for revenge. One discovery we made from this ordinary interaction was that the use of alcohol and to a lesser extent drugs is relatively common among women and girls involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. It was also through constant presence at Sister Sullivan's compound that I heard a lady proudly tell a story of how she lured her expatriate partner to be kidnapped by militants. She said she regretted the act because she was not given anything from the ransom that was collected from representatives of the kidnapped expatriate. Her story gives insight into the intrigues that are common between women involved in sexual liaisons and militant groups who use them to lure expatriate oil workers for ransom.

This brings us to the place of reflexivity in ethnographic research. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:16) argue that 'reflexivity' "implies that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them". Taylor (1998:37) submits that the principle of 'reflexivity' entails "how researchers position themselves within the context, process and production of the research". With reference to reflexivity, the constant presence of the main researcher at the orphanage compound helped us discover that some of the children brought there also had problem with alcohol and a few had drug related problems. While the orphanage represents an immediate ad hoc relief for distressed women and their 'fatherless' children, it is not a formal orphanage and therefore does not have the facilities to run as an orphanage. It is more like a meeting point for women and children who need immediate counselling and temporary support for one or two days. Most women we found there, also seem to have had a prior personal relationship with Sister Sullivan, or knew somebody who knew her or both.

This is where the National Museum became very relevant to our research. For instance, our long interaction with the curator of the National Museum in Oron provided us the

opportunity to study some of the puppet carvings and their relationship to the history of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. By analysing each of these symbolic forms with respect to their correlations with the research questions, we are able to understand how artefacts weave together the cultural contexts of the past and present of society. This is why the '*thick description*' (Geertz: 1973) variance of ethnography mandates the ethnographer to search out for and analyse symbolic forms, words, images, artefacts, pictures, institutions and behaviours associated with subjects under study.



**Plate 4.8** Entrance gate into the National Museum Oron

Source: Field Work 2008

As earlier noted, the main researcher of this study was at the study sites in the Niger Delta for an extended period from December 2007 to May 2009. This length of time enabled the challenges posed by oil enclave economy and sexual liaisons to be observed and recorded. For instance, the church renovations embarked upon by Exxon Mobil provided this study the opportunity to interrogate the attempts made by oil TNCs to introduce a moral narrative on the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and other social effects of oil extractive activities. Our in-depth interviews and FGDs later reveal that indeed, Exxon-Mobil has succeeded in diverting attention from oil enclivity as the root cause of sexual liaisons to an abstract religious and puritan narrative in which women (who are also the victims) are blamed. With churches renovated by Exxon Mobil, the narrative on the social vices of oil took a moral and puritan perspective. Women and girls who engage in sexual liaisons and are abandoned by their expatriate partners are then blamed by the pulpit for immorality. Our long stay within sight of the research enables the main researcher to interrogate the extent to which the phenomenon of sexual liaisons affects individuals and groups and what people are doing or what they say they are doing to address the problem, and the ways in which they adjust their lives to the challenges posed by the menace of oil induced sexual liaisons. Over time the

researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the manifestation of the research problem and its implications for human development in the Delta region of Nigeria.

### **Photographic still images or visual sociology**

Images convey. This is simple and perhaps unequivocal statement becomes much more complex with the addition of a few short words. How do images convey? What do images convey? To whom? In answering these questions, what was originally a simple declarative statement becomes a position; a stance concerning the ways to think about and think with images.

(Stanczak: 2007:1)

This section interrogates the uses and limitations of the “seen world” (Smith: 1992:2) or visual images in sociological investigation and analysis. This section also seeks to provide what Harrison (2004:23) refers to as “sociological conceptualisation” or insights on “the role of photography in people’s everyday lives”, as well as to explain why we adopt the use of visual media as primary and secondary sources of data collection in this study. Visual sociology opens an alternative angle for this study to probe into the research problem as well as provide answers to other aspects of the research questions that are not ordinarily available by other methods. We employ the visual as a means of augmenting other conventional methods of data collection adopted in this study.

Any time an attempt is made to employ visual sociology in research like this, issues such as the “visual credibility gap”<sup>41</sup>, “all photos lie”, “while photographs may not lie, liars may photograph” (Goldstein: 2007:61), and many other insinuations that visual images can be manipulated or fabricated by researchers come to the fore. Akpan (2005:119) adequately observes that “the decision to employ visual sociology in this research was certainly not predicated on the old dictum that ‘photographs never lie’—since digital technology has clearly changed the status of this dictum”. With the availability of photo management software, it is possible to manipulate and alter photographs.

Our use of visual sociology in this study is not to present misleading data but to use this nascent qualitative variance of data collection to augment others used in the study. Akpan (2005:120) had earlier observed “for readers who have never visited any oil community in Nigeria, the photographs in this project—most taken by the researcher—should be of even

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41 See Photographs Lie: Welcome to Journalism’s Newest Ethical Nightmare: Digital Enhancement, by J.D. Lasica (This article appeared in the Washington Journalism Review, the Boston Globe and the Sacramento Bee in 1988-89), accessed on 29/01/2011, at: <http://www.jdlasica.com/1989/06/07/photographs-that-lie/>

more practical value". While it is very difficult and less straightforward to "detect quantifiable errors in an image" (Goldstein: 2007:65), what is important is that the methodology used in taking and producing the picture must be as close as possible to the ethics of science. The most important stage in image acquisition and meaning is imbedded in the cultural context under which the image is produced, presented and understood by viewers.

Campion (2007:5) notes that "photography, in its own right, is an extremely large area of study" and that "despite its relatively short history, photography has undergone a complex evolution since it was invented in 1840". Campion's (2007:5) study adequately "traces the history of visual sociology and explores its roots and links with social documentary photography". Ball and Smith (1992:2) acknowledge that Simmel (1921) is among earlier social scientists who interrogate "the implications of the omnipresence of visual imagery and the ordinary viewing competence of human beings". They also note that out of the five senses of any human being, "the eye has a uniquely sociological function".

The Collins internet-linked Dictionary of Sociology describes visual anthropology as a research approach "which investigates the visual dimensions of societies, and is based on the assumption that different cultures frequently involve a strong visual component", and that "the visual can be recorded in various ways, including sketches, photographs, films and videotape" (Jary and Jary: 2005:671). Historically, visual images have been a medium through which we make sense of both the social and physical world around us.

Given that this study is not studying the polluting effects of hydrocarbon extractive activities on the Niger Delta environment, questions can be raised as to why we took the decision to use visual images to illustrate our research findings. Secondly, this study deals with the intersection of oil enclave economy and sexual liaisons and its effects on local women and community. Relatively, these issues can be considered to be in the private domain. It is therefore very difficult to comprehend why visual images emanating from such a research context can be publicly displayed in this thesis without compromising anonymity of participants. The third seeming contradiction would rest on our having made it abundantly clear in our elaboration of the research ethics at the beginning of this chapter that anonymity is the cardinal guiding principle of this study.

Two fundamental factors informed the contextual relevance of visual research as a method of research in this study. First of all, we are not displaying visual images of our research subjects. Secondly, the images we collected from the field are not individualised images, but public pictures of live events captured during our field work. Others are artefacts of puppets obtained from museums in the study area. These pictures and artefacts buttress



different dimensions of the intersection of oil economy and sexual liaisons. Some of these artefacts were particularly introduced to the researcher by community leaders to demonstrate that social dimensions of oil economy and sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta have been with the communities for some time. Some of the artefacts or puppets initially appeared abstract until the meanings and their sociological relevance to the investigation of the intersection of oil economy and sexual liaisons imbedded in them were explicitly explained by the community elders at focus group discussion session.

Visual images also helped us to capture the extent to which foreign oil companies employ religion to try and influence the narrative of the fundamental material roots of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta, away from oil extractive activities. The place of images captured by our still camera, of Exxon-Mobil funded renovation and reconstruction of church branches located in some of our field research sites, also gives us a window into the practical attempts made by oil transnational corporations to introduce and propagate a theological/religious puritan/moralistic narrative on the origins and problem of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. This way, oil companies would popularise a narrative that takes away the social and economic responsibility of the root cause of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and the problems it generates for OBCs away from oil extractive activities.

In other words, in consideration of the place of visual artefacts in this study, it is relatively helpful to identify both the significance and the role of visual images in understanding the intersection of oil enclave economy as a creation of transnational corporations from the West and its social impact, including the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. The place of images of the Exxon-Mobil funded renovation and reconstruction of church branches also gives us an impression that oil transnational corporations are trying to drive the narrative on the social impacts of oil extractive activities towards a moralistic dimension.

#### **4.5 FIELD RESEARCH CONSTRAINTS AND PROBLEMS**

At the proposal writing stage of this study, we did not envisage that some of our target participants would object to a face-to-face interview and opt for telephone interviews. We thought that given Nigeria's low level of technological development and the remote nature of our selected research sites, the telephone interviewing method would not be an optional technique for data collection in this study. But we were so wrong. When we arrived at our research sites and began to conduct initial pilot trials, we instantly discovered that the telephone interviewing method would have to be included in the menu because some

respondents opted out of the face-to-face interview methods. Besides the logistical challenge, financial implications and the need for re-orientation of research instrument, we had to put in place the necessary technical arrangements and facilities. The big advantage of telephone interviewing strategy was that it ensured greater anonymity of interviewees and key informants. But when some of them requested for change of scheduled time and day, the telephone interviewing gave the research team more flexibility relative to in-person interviewing and other methods.

There were specific limitations that the researcher confronted. First, being an 'outsider' from a different geographical region (Middle-belt) of Nigeria who does not speak nor understand any of the local languages of the Niger Delta region; puts him at a special disadvantage. Being a male conducting research on women and sexual liaisons made it even harder to probe into some critical issues that a female researcher could easily have run through and obtain responses without hesitation from participants. To circumvent these challenges, female research assistants were recruited, trained and equipped with the necessary field research skills to enable them assist the main researcher to probe and elicit information that is of critical importance to the study.

Despite the influence of Western values on Nigeria, Nigerians are still deeply glued to their cultures and traditions. Issues on sex, sexuality, sexual liaisons and sexual reproductive rights of women and children are not a subject for public debate in the home, village, community, or in family negotiations between women and men. In all Nigerian cultures, it will amount to extreme embarrassment for parents and community leaders to talk about sex or sex-related matters with their children or wards. With relative advancement in education and with rapidly increasing visibility of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers in the Niger Delta oil enclaves, we expected parents, community leaders, youths including even women and young girls involved in the practice, to speak freely on the subject of this study to our team of researchers. But that was not to be as most people were not comfortable about talking on the subject. There were those who felt they did not know much about issues of sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers and their effects. We understood the ignorance of such people because such activities take place outside the vicinity of the village or community.

Yet still others believe that it is not proper for a married woman to talk with men and or strangers about sex or sex-related issues. This explains why a good number of potential female participants who had earlier been contacted by our informants, and had initially agreed to be interviewed, later turned down the request. Their excuses range from "I don't

want to draw unnecessary attention to my family”, and/or “I don’t want to draw attention to myself and my community”. Given that our research sites were communities in which people knew each other relatively closely, participants were generally careful and cautious about discussing sex issues with strangers. Fears were driven by the possibility that neighbours would spread rumours about those who volunteered to take active part in our interview sessions.

Of course, the role of gossips and pettiness in economically rundown communities in any human society cannot be ruled out. Some of the women and girls involved in sexual liaisons sent remittances back to relatives in the village. This factor also made it difficult and insulated some respondents from freely revealing their opinions on specific sensitive questions. The foregoing limitations notwithstanding, we were able to overcome the challenges because most of the research assistants were ‘daughters and sons of the soil’. Some of our key informants and research assistants were knowledgeable and conversant with the language, cultural process/values, formal and informal protocols of reaching out to gatekeepers, sensitive norms and traditions of the area. They were also versatile with the strict adherence to gender roles. We therefore tapped into their background knowledge and put it into good use in reaching out and convincing people to participate in the research. For instance, the timing of our interview sessions was carefully programmed not to interfere with life activities of participants. During interview sessions, questions were worded, asked and administered in a friendly way, appropriate to time and space.

When we set out on this research, we did not envisage nor contemplate the use of telephone interviews as part of the qualitative data collection techniques. But when our key informants realised that some participants would not agree to be interviewed face-to-face, we decided to revert to the use of telephone. We also had problems with participants keeping to agreed times, dates and interview venues. After contacts were established and agreements reached with participants on the preferred interview time, day, or days of the week; there were occasions in which participants were nowhere to be found. In some cases, we made several contacts with participants before a single successful interview could be accomplished. In some cases, even after numerous contacts, some participants still refused to honour their initial commitments. The situation was not only cumbersome, but stressful and discouraging to our research assistants. This had a skyrocketing financial impact on our field costs and the seven month stay (November 2007–May 2008) in the Niger Delta.

Another problem we had was suspicion. The research team made considerable efforts to take residence within research sites and communities. This allowed us to engage in

informal/general and sometimes personal discussions with members of communities in at market places, eating places, the beach, at museums and other centres of social activities. While such efforts helped create a conducive environment for deep personal interaction and conversation between community members in research sites and the research team, communities in research sites were still suspicious of the research team. The good thing was that information elicited from our informal interaction and observations at research sites richly reveals the general reaction of people to the research questions. At some of these informal interactions, issues were posed as a general problem facing the Niger Delta which the research team wanted to understand so that a solution could be found. Responses and observations elicited from these isolated conversations were used to cross-check and confirm data collected from our normal qualitative interviews.

#### **4.6 RESEARCH ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

From a historical perspective, scientific knowledge has been intrinsically related to human values and interests. The sciences that are today termed “social sciences,” in earlier centuries went under the name “moral sciences”. With the rise of modern science, a split developed between facts and values, between the descriptive and the normative, between what is and what should be. This dichotomy was prominent in positivist philosophy, with its sharp distinction between an objective scientific and a subjective human side of research. The moral aspects of research, belonging to the value side of the dichotomy, became secondary and were left to the ethical codes of the profession and integrity of the researcher.

(Kvale: 1996:120)

Critical comments made on initial proposal drafts by my thesis supervisor emphasised that at all stages of the study, all ethical issues that are of critical importance must always be carried on board. This informed why right from the proposal or design stage of this study, we took ethical challenges head-on. Kvale (1996:124) posits that the main objective of the qualitative research interview is to obtain “qualitative descriptions of the life world of the subjects with respect to interpretation of their meaning”. He further attests that “research with human participants must serve scientific and human interests”. Also taking our bearing from the works of Eisner and Peshkin (1990) and Kimmel’s (1988) *Ethics and values in applied social science research*, we directly confronted the ethical challenges right from the proposal or design stage.

During presentation of the research proposal at the Sociology Department Postgraduate seminar, some of the critical comments became instant reminders on the need to be ethically

alert in a sensitive research like this one. At the postgraduate proposal seminar presentation, constructive comments on ethical issues initially sounded to the researcher like text book knowledge and messages rather than rules that could be practically followed. Though largely textbook orientations, observations made at the proposal seminar provided the researcher with pre-field work warnings as well as forearmed him on research ethics. These earlier professional warnings eventually turned out to be practical tools that guided the way ethical challenges were managed during the field interviews, ethnographic observations and conversations with research subjects. Kvale (1996:112) advises that in preparing a research proposal, it is always useful to “draft a parallel ethical protocol treating ethical issues that can be anticipated in an investigation”. Having passed the ethical test, the proposal for this study was itself first accepted by the thesis supervisor and approved by both the Sociology Department Postgraduate Board and the Rhodes University Higher Degrees Committee (RUHDC). RUHDC is the highest academic ethics committee at Rhodes University.

The Nigerian *National Ethics and Operational Guidelines for Research on Human Subjects*<sup>42</sup> was a guiding principle for this study. The study also subscribes to other general scientific research ethics. A letter of introduction was produced by the Head of Sociology Department, Rhodes University, requesting permission from institutions, communities, groups, individuals, and key informants who we would be interacting with in the course of our field work. There are some specific research settings, institutions, groups, subjects and individuals that did not require official written permission. For example, we could conduct observation visits to specific public access areas and environments without written permission. For those that were not open to the public, we made the necessary contacts to seek official permission.

Given the sensitive nature of this study and its commitment to contribute in building peace in the volatile Niger Delta region, we did everything possible to avoid anything that might generate additional psychological and emotional challenges to our main research subjects, communities, gatekeepers and/or institutions. Our research assistants received adequate training on how to interact with respondents or how to word sensitive and difficult questions during interviews. Adequate measures were put in place to ensure that research assistants did not take interviewee's responses out of context and did not discuss small parts of observations without putting them into the appropriate general context.

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<sup>42</sup>. See: *The Nigerian National Ethics and Operational Guidelines for Research on Human Subjects* (not dated), produced by the National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA), Abuja, Nigeria.

#### **4.7 QUALITATIVE METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS (QDA)**

With the exception of hand written notes taken during interviews and discussions, most of the field data was audio recorded. To condense the data for easy handling, management, transformation, and interpretation of output, the data was first manually transcribed; typed into the computer, word processed and thematically formatted using Microsoft Word. Given that the audio recorded data was huge, the transcription process took a long time to complete. The transcribed data was produced as a discussion document with verbatim quotations from participants. The objective was to ensure that the transcribed data is a true reflection of the issues covered during the interview sessions.

Having adopted qualitative data collection techniques, we had no option but to employ a descriptive qualitative method of data analysis in this study. To help us track relevant thematic segments of text, our use of the computer was limited to word processors. Aware that qualitative software packages have strengths and weaknesses; we decided not to use any because we did not want to evade the hard manual and intellectual labour of qualitative analysis required in a study like this. This enabled us to manually determine meaningful thematic categories for the analysis of salient issues. The advantages are immense.

First, thematic descriptive method of data analysis is explicable in this study because the data were collected through qualitative interviewing methods. Secondly, being qualitative data, it is very easy for participants' responses to be thematically itemised, arranged and analysed. The qualitative or descriptive data analysis approach in this study exhibits a distinctive approach, which gives us room not only to understand, but to blend the various forms of data collected from both the interviews and other ethnographic sources, such as cultural artefacts on sexuality and sexual liaisons, and photographic or visual sociological methods. Qualitative research and analytical methods are used to explore and understand the meanings of respondents' world view, their personal understanding of social reality or the impact of socioeconomic reality itself on their personal social lives. Qualitative research design and analysis also facilitate our understanding of the social structure, nature and causes of individual action or inaction.

The qualitative analytical method is further strengthened by the way that the data itself was largely collected and recorded in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. This means that the descriptive analysis of concepts in the form of words takes precedence over mechanical or quantitative numbers. Some of the face-to-face interviews were quite long, with important and relevant personal information scattered throughout. Sorting out and

picking out such vital information demanded that we go through the transcripts several times. This was the only way to identify relevant thematic issues in the long interviews and to arrange our data in analytical themes, rather than coding information according to the specific questions asked or specific topics covered. The adoption of this data analysis technique is informed by our understanding that people who have lived with certain experiences are often the best source of expert knowledge about those experiences. This technique is a valuable approach when adequate descriptions of field narratives are desired.

It is also important to point out that participants' responses that were considered to be of critical importance to this study were highlighted with quotes. Our driving objective is to try and bring to the fore some critically illuminating responses emanating from our interview sessions as spoken and/or expressed in the words of our participants on the issues under investigation. Although these are direct quotes from participants' spoken words, there are some cases in which we had to restructure the grammar. In doing that, we were very careful not to alter the original meaning that participants intended to convey. In such a situation, we cannot rule out the possibility of some limited errors in the process of paraphrasing and rewording their ideas. Given the low level of education of most of the participants, our objective was first and foremost to restructure their responses by standardising their grammatical expressions for easy assimilation and understanding because English is not their first language. In the process, there is the possibility for errors to be committed.

We organised data into major themes, categories, and case examples. Narratives were analysed within the context of our research objectives set out in chapter one of this study. Attention was paid to detail, descriptive vocabulary, and direct quotes from interviewees. This approach permits for a critical interrogation of selected issues, cases, or events in depth and detail. The foregoing systematic processing and handling of qualitative data gave room for increased depth of analysis and provides relatively detailed interrogation of data that would not have been possible in predetermined response choices that characterise quantitative surveys. In doing that, dominant patterns in the narratives, common themes and responses dealing with specific research questions and objectives were identified. We tried to determine how these dominant narratives, common themes and patterns help to illuminate the broader questions and objectives that drive this study. Narratives that deviate from the dominant positions were interrogated with the objective to identify variables that might explain these atypical responses.

## **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter exhaustively discusses the method of research and spells out the research design adopted in this study. The research methods adopted in this study set the stage to identify and analyse the interesting stories that emerge from participants' narratives. The objective is to grasp how these stories can help provide illuminating answers to the broader research objectives and questions. In the process of data analysis, the patterns of narratives are critically examined to ascertain whether there would be any requirement to return to the field to collect additional data, or whether any of the research questions were not adequately answered or need to be revised and recast. We also tried to determine the extent to which the dominant pattern of narratives in our findings corroborates research findings of any corresponding qualitative study that has been conducted on the Niger Delta. The intention is that, by establishing such a similar outcome, our conclusions and recommendations would greatly be enriched. If not, we will then need to interrogate what might explain the discrepancies of our findings with earlier studies. The next chapter reviews state palliatives and community development efforts of oil TNCs as spearheaded by Shell.



## **CHAPTER 5: OIL, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PALLIATIVES AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA**

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### **5 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter critically examines the strengths and weaknesses of government palliatives and community development partnership initiatives (CDPs) employed by Shell to contribute to poverty reduction in OBCs. The objective is to assess the extent to which such policies and programs have been able to deliver on poverty reduction and to empower women in the Niger Delta.

#### **5.1 STATE PALLIATIVES AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA (1957–2007)**

The first constitutional step taken in response to poverty and human development problems in the Niger Delta Region was the appointment of the Henry Willink Minority Rights Commission in September 1957 (Willink:1958). It was set up to address the ‘apprehension’ and fears of all minorities in Nigeria, as it moved towards formal political independence. The Willink commission documented the depth of neglect that the Niger Delta region had experienced and recommended the best strategies for the development of the region. The commission specifically recommended that the Niger Delta region be accorded special developmental status by making it a special area to be developed directly by the federal government of Nigeria (Willink: 1958:41–2, para. 18). It also recommended the establishment of a special developmental body to handle the problems of the Niger Delta (Willink: 1958:94, para. 27). The commission further argued that the problem of poverty in the Niger Delta:

...is a matter which requires a special effort and co-operation of the Federal, Eastern and Western Region Governments; it does not concern one Region only. Not only because the area involves two Regions, but because it is poor, backward and neglected.

(Willink: 1958:94, para. 27)

On the heels of the Willink Commission's report, the federal government of Nigeria established the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1960 to cater for the unique development needs of the area. The enactment of the NDDDB under Section 14 of the 1960 independent Constitution mandated it to provide physical development for the Niger Delta region. The NDDDB was also enjoined to be responsible for advising the government of the Federation of Nigeria and the government of Western Nigeria and Eastern Nigeria with respect to the physical development of the Niger Delta. The inauguration of the NDDDB was met with high expectations that the widespread poverty and neglect in the oil rich region would be addressed in a comprehensive manner (African Network for Environment and Economic Justice: 2004:52–54). With a 15% revenue contribution from the federal government (Ite: 2004:4) and technical support provided by Britain (Frynas: 2000:48), the NDDDB was expected to transform agricultural development in the Niger Delta.

But the verdict of British agricultural advisers was that NDDDB was “an inefficient institution” (Frynas: 2000:48). Their 1965 confidential report noted that the NDDDB “had no clear idea of its objectives or how they should set about sorting out desirable projects into priority order”<sup>43</sup>. The report went further to assert that there was a desire among Nigerian politicians “to have something spectacular to show for political motives” and that this was one the reasons why “misguided effort” was “put into rice development”<sup>44</sup>, at the expense of other agricultural development in the region.

In other words, the agricultural development efforts put into rice production by the NDDDB rather than support for the diverse forms of robust agricultural subsistence practices in the region, were nothing more than “a public relations exercise” (Frynas: 2000:49). The NDDDB did not also have a mandate to address problems specific to women in the Niger Delta. The NDDDB was one of the first national interventionist policies to adopt the ‘gender blind’ approach to national development in Nigeria (Awe: 1996:3–13). Moribund before the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1967, the NDDDB regrettably failed (Ite: 2004:4). The Civil war ended in 1970, but the “convulsions and displacements concomitant with war and political upheaval” (Nafziger: 1972:223) had a profound effect on economic activity in the country and in turn shifted national attention away from the Niger Delta until the 1990s.

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<sup>43</sup>See: Confidential Report of an advisory visit to the Federation of Nigeria by A. R. Melville, agricultural advisor, Ministry of Overseas Development in London (22 March – 22 May 1965), OD30/43, PRO., quoted in Frynas (2000) op. cit. page 49.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid

The 1990s witnessed the enactment of wide-range concessions to OBCs in response to mass agitations and protests against oil TNCs in the Niger Delta (Ebeku: 2008:400–403). Several committees and commissions including the 1992 Alfa Belgore Commission of Inquiry, the 1994 Don Etiebet Ministerial Fact-finding Team, and the 1999 Oladayo Popoola Niger Delta Panel, were set up to address the social and economic problems of OBCs (Frynas: 2000:49). Financial contributions from the federal account to oil producing states of the Niger Delta were significantly increased from 1.5 percent to 3 percent (Frynas: 2000:49). The 1995 Constitutional Conference recommended that in sharing the Federation Account Revenue, 13 percent was to be set aside as derivation revenue to assist the development of oil-producing communities<sup>45</sup>. The intention was “to financially empower the oil-producing states of the Niger Delta to tackle the monumental neglect and degradation of the area given the lack of federal presence and ineffectiveness of federal spending in the area”<sup>46</sup>.

Within the same period, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was created in 1993, and became the second robust palliative put up to again attempt to address the problem of human and environmental development in the Niger Delta (Ite: 2004:4–5). Compared with its predecessors, OMPADEC appeared better established to make some impact on the development of the region because it had at its disposal 3% revenue allocations for each of the nine oil producing state from the federal account (Frynas: 2000:49).

One recognisable achievement of OMPADEC is that its development projects were spread throughout the Niger Delta region. However, it suffered from a myriad of problems which included lack of a master plan to define its developmental objectives and strategies, inadequate funding, official profligacy and corruption, and an unfavourable political climate (Ite: 2004:4). There was also a squabble over OMPADEC board membership and the formula for distributing projects to OBCs (Frynas: 2000:49–50). OMPADEC was scrapped in 1999 for failure to deliver development to OBCs (Obi: 1997b). Failure by OMPADEC to deploy resources to develop OBCs illustrates the extent to which oil revenues have not always benefited village communities who are directly affected by oil operations. On the hills of its demise, OMPADEC left behind what has been described as “a legacy of abandoned projects

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<sup>45</sup>See: Urhobo Historical Society: *The politics of the 13 per cent derivation principle*”, by David Edevbie Commissioner for Finance & Economic Planning, Delta State, 05/16/2000, accessed on 29/12/2010, at: [http://www.waado.org/environment/fedgovt\\_nigerdelta/RevenueAllocation/13PercentAllocation.htm](http://www.waado.org/environment/fedgovt_nigerdelta/RevenueAllocation/13PercentAllocation.htm)

<sup>46</sup>Ibid

and unpaid contracts all over the Niger Delta”<sup>47</sup>. There is also the considerable perception within OBCs that OMPADEC failed because it was more or less a conduit through which contracts were awarded and money siphoned back “to the money-bags” in government (Ite: 2004:4). The board of management was dissolved in February 1996, the OMPADEC Act repealed and the Commission disbanded (Ojukwu-Ogba: 2009:141). Like its predecessors, OMPADEC did not focus on the challenges facing women in the Niger Delta.

Besides complaints that the 3% allocation from the federal account to oil producing areas was too low to make any appreciable impact on the lives of OBCs, the principle of derivation in revenue allocation which was in place at political independence in 1960 has been consciously and systematically obliterated by successive regimes. From a derivation principle that stood at 100 percent in 1953; 50 percent in 1960; 45 percent in 1970; 20 percent in 1975; 2 percent in 1982; it was drastically reduced to 3 percent in 1992 (Ojo: 2010:31). With the return to civil rule in 1999, the 1999 constitution made provision for 13% of oil revenue obtained from oil produced on-shore, that is, on the land areas of each of the nine oil producing states, namely: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers, Imo, Ondo; to be allocated to the same states from which it is derived (Ahmad and Singh: 2003:17, Frynas: 2000:50).

The third palliative is the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). It was established in 2000 by an Act of the Nigerian National Assembly to replace OMPADEC. With a broad mandate including the provision of infrastructural development in the Niger Delta area, NDDC inaugural objective was to be a catalyst that would facilitate socioeconomic and general human development in the region. It was launched in December 2001 as an ambitious programme to produce a development master plan for the Niger Delta. This time around, built-in mechanisms for accountability to the various levels of government from federal to states were put in place. Unfortunately, one of the first problems with NDDC was to “fall short of the demands by OBCs for greater control of the disbursement of its revenue and allocation of projects at the community level” (Ite: 2004:5).

The commission used its first five years to draw up accounting safeguards and an authorisation manual, which was approved by the first board in 2002 with an amendment in

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid

2004<sup>48</sup>. Aggregated funding received by the NDDC from both the Federal Government and oil TNCs from 2001–2006 is put at N241,584 billion (Nigeria High Commission London: 2009:17). There were growing concerns<sup>49</sup> at the beginning that the NDDC “is simply another aloof government agency, another cocoon for official corruption” (Ebeku: 2008:421). In 2009<sup>50</sup>, NDDC became embroiled in a leadership tussle<sup>51</sup> over alleged misappropriation of N46 billion in contracts without recourse to due process. By March 2010, the federal government constituted a high profile security team to investigate the commission with a view to identifying those behind the alleged scandal<sup>52</sup>.

This was on the heels of the House of Representatives ad hoc committee that had earlier been set up to investigate the alleged N200 million spent by the commission’s chief executive to renovate his office<sup>53</sup>. In another development, a letter dated March 31, 2010, addressed to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) by the Executive Director (ED), Projects, petitioned the Presidency over the mismanagement of the commission by the MD. The letter alleged that the MD awarded 51 projects to his friends without due process and in utter violation of laid down financial regulations<sup>54</sup>. The office of the SGF ordered a probe into the matter. Ironically, the MD had himself earlier written a petition against the ED Projects alleging that he singularly engaged 44 consultants without approval from the board or management of the commission<sup>55</sup>. The whole issue became an ego and internecine war

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<sup>48</sup>See: “NNDC board battles MD over Contracts”, by Segun Adeleye, in *Nigerian Compass*, Tuesday, 01 June 2010, accessed on 29/12/2010, at: [http://www.compassnewspaper.com/NG/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=52169:nddc-board-battles-md-over-n46b-contracts-&catid=672:top-stories&Itemid=794](http://www.compassnewspaper.com/NG/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52169:nddc-board-battles-md-over-n46b-contracts-&catid=672:top-stories&Itemid=794)

<sup>49</sup>See: “Clark chides oil firms over excuses on 3% NDDC dues”, by Sola Adebayo, in *allAfrica.com*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2002, accessed on 29/12/2010, at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200208070310.html>

<sup>50</sup>See: “You’re worse than OMPADEC, Alamieyeseigha tells NDDC”, by Yusuph Olaniyonu, in *allAfrica.com* 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2002, accessed on: 29/12/2010, at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200209110024.html>

<sup>51</sup>See: “NDDC MD, Board on Collision Course, - He Runs A One-Man Show - Member, - It’s Not True — MD”, by Donald Ojogo, *Saturday Tribune*, Saturday, 17 October 2009, accessed on: 29/12/2010, at: <http://www.tribune.com.ng/17102009/news/news5.html>

<sup>52</sup>See: “Alleged scam: Heads may roll in NDDC”, by Donald Ojogo, in *Nigerian Tribune*, Tuesday, June 01, 2010, accessed on 29/30/2010, at: <http://www.tribune.com.ng/index.php/news/6190-alleged-scamheads-may-roll-in-nddc>

<sup>53</sup>See: “NDDC MD, Board on Collision Course...” by Donald Ojogo, op. cit

<sup>54</sup>Ibid

<sup>55</sup>Ibid

between the MD and the ED projects. Such very low quality of leadership is detrimental to service delivery to OBCs.

In the ensuing confusion the MD was dragged before the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and Other Related Offences Commission (EFCC) for alleged abuse of due process in the award of contracts, and in clear violation of the spirit and intent of the Public Procurement Act 2007 and section 500 of the NDDC authorisation manual<sup>56</sup>. In June, 2010, contractors executing 500 projects awarded at a cost of N46bn by the commission's MD without compliance with due process<sup>57</sup> were directed by the Board of the NDDC to stop work. The commission needed to create a new management approach to enable it deliver on its mandate of providing sustainable development for the region<sup>58</sup>. The above overview strongly shows that the history of nonperforming by government palliatives also contributes its part to the incidence of poverty in the region.

The foregoing attests that the Nigerian government have tried in many ways to invest resources and alleviate poverty in the Niger Delta region. The pervasiveness of poverty in the Niger Delta is therefore not due to lack of significant resources earmarked for the development of the region. But the problem seems that resources budgeted for the development of OBCs do not always get to the grassroots to address the basic developmental needs of local inhabitants. This failure is due in part to corruption, poor governance and lack of accountability within the Nigerian political system and public administration.

The varying ways in which oil extractive activities affect the social and economic life of OBCs does not dwell solely in the domain of oil pollution alone. Rather, the ways oil revenue is managed or mismanaged also contribute to the totality of the effects of the oil enclavity on the lives of OBCs. This partly explains why concentrating our analytical energies on oil revenue accruing to the national economy (Gidado: 1999; Hamilton: 1985; Onoh: 1983; Pearson: 1970; Penrose: 1968), merely echoes the pre-dominance and unquestionable role of oil in revenue generation, and will end up telling only part of the story.

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid

<sup>57</sup>See: "NDDC board stops execution of N46bn controversial projects", By Sunday Aborisade, in *Punch, Tuesday, 1 June 2010*, accessed on: 29/12/2010, at: <http://www.punchng.com/Articl.aspx?theartic=Art201006011313479>

<sup>58</sup>See: "NNDC board battles MD over Contracts", by Segun Adeleye, in *Nigerian Compass, Tuesday, 01 June 2010*, accessed on 29/12/2010, at: [http://www.compassnewspaper.com/NG/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=52169:nddc-board-battles-md-over-n46b-contracts-&catid=672:top-stories&Itemid=794](http://www.compassnewspaper.com/NG/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52169:nddc-board-battles-md-over-n46b-contracts-&catid=672:top-stories&Itemid=794)

In the same light, the resources control debate also needs to call scholarly attention to the need to interrogate the extent to which such agitations have been able to weave the social and economic circumstances of local OBCs into their narrative and the practical steps taken to alleviate such challenges.

To that effect, resource control agitators from the Niger Delta need to provide answers to the question: Why have huge resources invested by the federal government in the form of palliatives and managed by elites from the Niger Delta failed to address the social and other unquantifiable human effects of oil extractive activities on OBCs? This question is necessary because the choruses of resource control activism need to re-focus energies on the gross failure of government palliatives (including OMPADEC and NDDC) managed by elite from the Niger Delta. In other words, we need to explain the contradiction between steady increases in budgetary allocations to the states of the Niger Delta over the years; and continuous deterioration of the social and economic lives of rural OBCs. This is indeed part of the social dimension of oil and partly explains why failure to deliver on poverty alleviation by elite from the Niger continues to push local inhabitants into alternative ways of survival including sexual liaisons, youth restlessness and violence. As we shall see in the course of this study, such alternative ways of survival are detrimental to peace and security in the region.

Meanwhile, on the heels of eminent failure of NDDC, on 5 April 2006 at meeting with selected 'stakeholders' in the Niger Delta (composed of the Vice President; Governors of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, and Rivers States; the Managing Director of NDDC as well as the Chairman of NDDC; some High Traditional Chiefs of the Niger Delta area; and a few members of the National Assembly (Federal Parliament) who are indigenes of the Niger Delta region); President Obasanjo re-echoed the view of the 1958 Willink's Commission when he passed a vote of no confidence on the NDDC and declared that the Niger Delta: "needs special attention by all of us. It is not just the Federal Government alone. It is not for the state government or the local government alone. The Niger Delta needs community attention. It needs family, individual and oil company attention. It even needs special attention from our development partners" (Ebeku: 2008:407-408).

On 18 April 2006, 13 days after the meeting of 'stake holders', the Federal government inaugurated the Consolidated Council on Social and Economic Development of the Coastal States of the Niger Delta (COSEND) headed by President Obasanjo as Chairman and Secretary to the Federal Government. Other members included all Governors from the Niger Delta; five persons nominated by the President; and representatives of NDDC, Nigerian

National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC); oil TNCs; Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Ministry of Works, and Ministry of Power and Steel. Altogether, COSEND was a 50-member body (Ebeku: 2008:408).

COSEND was charged with the responsibility for the development of the Niger Delta and mandated to implement a nine-point plan for the socioeconomic development in areas which included: employment generation; transportation; education; health; telecommunications; environment; agriculture; power; and water resources<sup>59</sup>. The establishment of COSEND raised several critical questions. First of all, it was inaugurated when NDDC had not been scrapped. Secondly, although some selected youth organisations were invited or consulted in the process leading to its inauguration, again like previous attempts at addressing the problem of poverty and human development in the Niger Delta, mainstream militant groups and civil society organisations in the region were not invited and therefore did not have specific representation. There are more questions that beg for answers. What purpose was the new parallel body going to serve that would be different from NDDC? What was the relationship between COSEND and NDDC going to be? Given that COSEND had no legal statute establishing it; and given that the Obasanjo's presidency was drawing to an end, what was going to be the life span of COSEND? A critical review of the former President's actions seems to provide some clue.

With no statute and no legal existence; COSEND had no legal basis to continue to exist. The actual role or mandate of COSEND was never clear. Unlike previous developmental bodies (such as OMPADEC and NDDC) it had neither a budget nor defined sources of finance. Moreover, it had no organisational structure of authority, and its relationship with the NDDC (an existing developmental institution) as well as with other development agencies (such as Niger Delta states and local governments) was never defined. Given that other developmental agencies continue to exist independently of COSEND, was it conceived to be supervisory agency of all the development agencies that formed part of its membership, or it was it yet another developmental agency? In the words of Ebeku (2008:416), COSEND was "an amorphous body, and this is a serious weakness".

The former President states that the need for the establishment of COSEND arose out of the failure of NDDC to deliver development to OBCs. In his words; the former President

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<sup>59</sup>See: "New Development Plan for Niger Delta", Guardian, 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2006, accessed on 13/10/2009, at: <http://odili.net/news/source/2006/apr/19/6.html>



declared that NDDC was “not doing 100 percent what we want it to do” (Ebeku: 2008:408). Yet, the same President also agreed that NDDC should not be scrapped. To say the least, it is difficult to see how a non-performing agency can be allowed to continue in the same manner. COSEND was conceived in the likes of the United States of America’s post World War II Marshall Plan for Europe. It was described by some in the local media as “Niger Delta Marshal Plan” (International Crisis Group: 2006b:13). Its value was reportedly put at over N20 trillion and the money was to come from the oil industry (Aghalino: 2009:63, International Crisis Group: 2006a, b). Other far reaching measures included the drive to address the problem of unemployment amongst OBCs. Besides employment generation, the nuts and bolts of COSEND’s palliative were to span eight other core areas which included transport, education, health, telecommunications, environment, agriculture, power and water resources (Ebeku: 2008:411–412, Aghalino: 2009:63).

To that effect, about 20,000 new jobs were to be created for the Niger Delta. In addition, President Obasanjo pledged to flag N230 billion (\$1.75 billion) to construct the long abandoned East-West highway. The River Niger was to be dredged and the Petroleum Training Institute, (PTI), Effurun, Warri in Delta state was to be upgraded into a degree awarding institution. A Federal Polytechnic was to be established in Bayelsa State by September 2006. About 396 rural OBCs were to be provided with electricity. Over 600 communities were equally to be provided with potable water. An officer in the office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation was to be appointed to coordinate the various intervention programmes by all tiers of government and those of the oil companies and development partners (Aghalino: 2009:63).

A presidential order directed that a certain number of persons from the Niger Delta states be recruited into the Armed Forces of the Federation (Army, Air Force and Navy) as well as into the Nigeria Police. About 20 percent of 7300 available employment positions in teaching across the country at the level of primary and secondary schools owned by the Federal Government were to be reserved for the indigenes of the Niger Delta area. In addition, the former president also directed the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC – an oil company owned by the Nigerian federal government) to create and fill 1000 new job positions, 20 percent of which should be reserved for the people of the Niger Delta area (Ebeku: 2008:411–412, Aghalino: 2009:63).

The employment component of COSEND was the most critical and strategic because, if genuinely implemented as planned, it would put money directly into the hands of the people from OBCs. In specific terms, COSEND initiated a process by which the NNPC, Federal

ministry of education, the Nigerian armed forces and the police were to provide men and women from the Niger Delta with new jobs at the latest by the end of 2006. But signs that these palliatives were not going to work began to show when it became very clear that from the very beginning, COSEND did not spell out in clear details how these jobs were going to be created. Given the Nigerian political patronage system, even if such jobs were created, there were no details on how these jobs were actually going to get to people in OBCs who need them most. Related studies have indeed established that oil mineral resource based enclaves do not only “induce patronage politics” (Collier and Hoeffler: 2005:632) but “reinforce the patronage politics so prevalent in Africa” (Shaxson: 2007:1123)

Ebeku (2008:412) confirms the foregoing apprehension from his field research which revealed that “most, if not all, of those who get such things are relations, sons and daughters, friends and cronies of high officers of government most of whom do not really need them – not those who actually need them”. He then opined, “there is nothing to indicate that the distribution of the presidential ‘employment largesse’ will not go the same way”. His conclusion therefore was that COSEND “will solve no problem whatsoever in regard to the issue of widespread unemployment in the Niger Delta region”. Despite doubts in people’s minds, widespread concerns and acknowledgement that youth unemployment is one of the major problems in the Niger Delta made people cautiously welcome the vision of COSEND on employment generation. The anticipation was that employment would provide a trickle down effect on income generation for Niger Delta youths.

The decision to immediately lift the embargo on police recruitment was a positive step in the right direction. The proposed creation of 1,000 new positions by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and recruitment of 7,300 National Certificate of Education (NCE) and University graduate teachers by the end of 2006, would have gone along way in lifting the present unemployment pressure. Similarly, emphasis on creating employment in other security institutions like the Nigerian armed forces suggests that COSEND had an unwritten intention to absorb elements from the cadre of the various militant groups in the Niger Delta. But a critical review of the extent to which members of militant groups or youths of the Niger Delta were excluded from formative stages of COSEND membership, suggests that there was no sincerity of purpose on the part of President Obasanjo. In the first place, the process by which the government arrived at the new policy remains suspect till today (Aghalino: 2009:63).

The first problem with COSEND was that from its conception and inception, it had no statutory legal standing. It was an ad hoc administrative entity spontaneously established by

presidential fiat. Its life span had no clarity of time frame in terms of termination or continuity. Like its predecessor the NDDB recommended by the Willink Commission, COSEND did not have any an implementable focus. What COSEND had in excess was executive prowess provided by the President and state Governors. Ebeku (2008:409) refers to this as “*executory functions*” because it was composed of executives from different development bodies, agencies, ministries and government departments, who were empowered to embark on “unilaterally and collectively determined development projects” (Ebeku: 2008:409). In the absence of a statutory legal backing, COSEND lacked not only legal security, but its continuity could not be guaranteed. By the time the former President Obasanjo, his Vice President, Secretary to the Federal Government, and the Niger Delta Governors left office on 29 May 2007, COSEND had not registered any appreciable developmental impact on the lives of OBCs. It became obvious that it was a personalised, and not an institutionalised palliative.

Other problems associated with the composition of COSEND relates to the question of the criteria for membership. If COSEND were to run as a technically driven palliative organisation that would be responsible for assessing poverty and human development needs of OBCs; and were to prepare a detailed plan of action, its membership should have been composed of experts and professionals from different critical disciplines including engineers, planners, sociologists, pollution experts, environmental experts, architects, agricultural extension trainers, employment recruitment professionals, etc. Unfortunately, this was not the case and this is one of the reasons why COSEND failed to deliver (Ebeku: 2008:411). COSEND did not learn from one of the 1958 Willink Commission's most important recommendations which states that the NDDB should first of all “conduct a survey of the entire area (Niger Delta), which would be carried out by a doctor, an agriculturalist, an educationist, an expert on communications and such other experts as are required” (Willink Commission: 1958:95, para. 28).

By excluding members of militant groups or youths of the Niger Delta area from membership of COSEND, it became suspected that COSEND was not in anyway different from previous palliatives (OMPADEC and NDDC) whose appointments were largely driven by politics of patronage. One of the leading militant groups in the Niger Delta, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) openly rejected COSEND (Aghalino: 2009:63). Moreover, bringing on board State Governors to nominate the COSEND members speaks volumes. Aghalino (2009:63) sums it all when he states:

It took almost seven years before President Obasanjo launched the promised “Comprehensive Development for the Niger Delta”. When he launched the plan on March 27 2007, two months to the end of his 8-years rule, because of its timing or its doubtful motive, or both, the Niger Delta Regional Master Plan recently launched by the outgoing President Olusegun Obasanjo did not attract the expected enthusiasm both from its target beneficiaries and their compatriots in other parts of the country. It would appear that, increasingly, it became clear that Obasanjo administration in its untidy succession plan could not but include the South-South in its calculations if he was to bequeath a Nigeria that would be minimally governable. This must have influenced the choice of His Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the then governor of Bayelsa state, an Ijaw as the vice presidential running mate of Umar Yar’adua in the ticket of the People’s Democratic Party during the 2007 elections.

Yet again, it seems that Nigeria did not learn from the argument of the 1958 Willink Commission that it is not enough for government to nominate persons from the Niger Delta area into bodies meant to address poverty and the human development needs of the region. Rather, what is of paramount importance that such persons “must include men who are ready to criticise” and must also be people “elected or nominated by local bodies in the area” (Willink: 1958:96).

During an appraisal meeting of progress made under COSEND held on 18 July 2006, some civil rights activists challenged the Government to publish the names of the persons from OBCs who have been given employment. Both former President Obasanjo and some state Governors at the time did not take kindly to this suggestion (Ebeku: 2008:421). But again, it shows clearly the absence of transparency in the entire COSEND initiative. In his inaugural speech as the new President on 29 May 2007, Umaru Shehu Yar’Adua, acknowledged the failure of state palliatives and pledged to pay “urgent attention”<sup>60</sup> to the crisis of poverty and human development in the Niger Delta. He did not specifically state whether he would continue with COSEND or not. Eventually, COSEND fizzled out on its own.

By 18 September 2007, four months after a new president had been sworn in, there was no verifiable evidence published in any newspaper of the employment generated by COSEND. The proposed dualisation of the East–West Road had also not taken off. (Ebeku: 2008:417). In the 2008 federal government’s budget, the President then committed 69 billion

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<sup>60</sup>See: ‘Nigeria: Inauguration Speech by President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua’, in *allAfrica.com*, 30 May 2007, accessed on: 29/12/2010, at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200705300790.html>, also cited in Ebeku (2008: 17) op. cit

naira (US\$566) to the NDDC<sup>61</sup>. This figure translates into more than twice the 2007 federal budget allocated to the NDDC. It also demonstrates an indication of commitment by the Federal Government under his leadership to tackling the problem of poverty and marginalisation amongst OBCs.

A critical question needs to ask: Even if the COSEND's employment generation initiatives were implemented, could such measures have met the collective demands of OBCs for poverty alleviation and employment? In the declarations of rights from the Ogoni Bill of Rights to Kaima declaration, OBCs' have always demanded employment in the oil TNCs operating in the region. But COSEND's proposed employment generation strategy took out oil TNCs. The NNPC, on which COSEND depended to create jobs for the Niger Delta, was dissolved by the new President and replaced with five separate companies. In any case, NNPC is not a key player in the field of oil exploration and production in terms of field operations as are the oil TNCs operating in the region like Shell, ChevronTexaco, Mobil, etc. This explains why Niger Delta youths promptly rejected COSEND in its entirety. This is the way *Punch Newspapers* reported the reaction of youths:

Barely 24 hours after President Olusegun Obasanjo have unfolded measures to stem the tide of restiveness and hostage taking in the Niger Delta, some groups in the area described the measures as incapable of solving any problem in the region. During the meeting in Abuja on Tuesday, Obasanjo had reeled out a nine-point development agenda for the Niger Delta and urged the youths to desist from criminal acts so that peace and development could take root in the region. But one of the youth leaders who attended the meeting, Mr. Marvin Yobana, told our correspondent that only the creation of massive employment opportunities in the oil industry for the youths of the area could appease them. Yobana, who is the National President of Ogoni Youth Council, stated that the Federal Government should impress on oil companies operating in the Niger Delta to mount a special training programme for youths of the region so as to be able to work in the oil firms<sup>62</sup>.

The foregoing suggests that there was nothing to indicate that COSEND could have succeeded where the previous government palliatives had failed to deliver. Although there was indeed the need for a new development initiative to replace NDDC, the establishment of COSEND was not certainly the best option. What is needed to deal effectively with the

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<sup>61</sup>See, 'Nigeria: New Hope for Old 'Master Plan' on Niger Delta', in *allAfrica.com*, accessed on: 29/12/2010, at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200711191052.html>

<sup>62</sup>See: "Obasanjo is not serious about tackling N' Delta problem", Reported by Soni Daniel, in the *Punch*, Friday April 21, 2006, accessed on: 29/12/2010, at: <https://lists.mayfirst.org/pipermail/friends/2006-April/000111.html>

human development problem in the Niger Delta is not a new development agency but rather a new approach which will engage the demands of ordinary people from OBCs. Unfortunately, the philosophical thrust of COSEND did not reflect that new approach. The statement by Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) rejecting COSEND sums it all up:

We do not need any further mismanagement of the fast diminishing resources of our land by the award of bogus contracts intended to channel the wealth of the Niger Delta back to the hands of those who have looted... all these years.

(cited in Ebeku: 2008:417).

The implementation of government palliatives for the Niger Delta has not been accompanied by social justice and equity. In other words, the political leadership in the Niger Delta (especially Governors and local government chairmen) are alleged to have “squandered enormous resources that they would have used to develop the region”. They are therefore said to be “complicit in the underdevelopment of the region” (Ebeku: 2008:418). Ebeku also observes that, “since 2001 each of the state governors in the Niger Delta region collects huge sums of money under the 13 *percent* revenue derivation formula (as published monthly by the federal government, each collects billions of Naira (millions of US Dollars) monthly), yet there is presently no evidence that the governors have used the money for purposes beneficial to the local people in any significant way” (Ebeku: 2006:321). For instance, the former governor of Bayelsa state Diepereye Alamieyesigha was alleged to have fraudulently enriched himself to the tune of \$12 million. The same story goes for other states (International Crisis Group: 2006c:24).

Late President Yar'Adu acknowledged the complicity of political elite in the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. He recommended in his *Seven Point Agenda* that OBCs “must be directly involved in designing and claiming ownership of programs” if poverty and unemployment are to be reduced in the Niger Delta (Nigeria High Commission London: 2009:17). The late President was merely echoing the UNDP insistence that for human development to take place in the Niger Delta, the people must be prepared to hold their governments and leaders accountable:

People at the grass-roots should demand more accountability from their elected or appointed representatives in general, but also in terms of the implementation of particular development projects. Funds meant for community development should be properly expended, with accountability and transparency. And since part of social and community responsibility is the strict adherence to the tenets of public service, local

populaces should act as checks on public servants, community leaders and the political elites if they are not rendering the expected services to the electorate or community.

(UNDP, 2006:403–404)

Within the context of dismal performance by government palliatives, the debate on how to address the social and economic effects of oil on OBCs began to shift focus away from the Nigerian state to the role that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can play. For instance, Idemudia (2009:91) succinctly captured the thrust of the debate thus: “combination of corporate-community conflicts and oil transnational corporations’ (TNCs) rhetoric about being socially responsible has meant that the issue of community development and poverty reduction have recently moved from the periphery to the heart of strategic business thinking within the Nigerian oil industry”. These are issues interrogated in the next section.

## **5.2 OIL TNCs’ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA**

The current climate of violence, insecurity and lawlessness in the Niger Delta has significantly increased the risk and cost of resource extraction. In a bid to address the difficult operating environment, SCIN [Shell Companies in Nigeria] initiated the development of a Peace and Security Strategy (PaSS); an integrated and comprehensive approach to establishing security through peace rather than through purely fiscal means.

(WAC Services: 2003:5)

Given the failure of government palliatives, an alternative approach anchored on the premise of CSR and spearheaded by SDPC emerged as another attempt to address the social and economic problems of OBCs. This time around, the focus tilts heavily towards poverty alleviation and empowerment of women in the Niger Delta women. Major stake holders began to perceive CSR and the promotion of joint community partnerships with oil TNCs to be a formidable panacea for sustainable community development and eradication of poverty in the region (Orogun: 2009:463–465).

In response to the enormity of this challenge, oil TNCs led by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) began to adopt partnership strategies as a means to contribute to poverty reductions and as a guarantee to secure their social licence to operate. CSR which was initially a voluntary rhetoric by TNCs (Bartol et al.: 1997), suddenly became a globally acceptable standard practice (Carr: 2000; Jirasek: 2003; Korhonen: 2003:301–302; Lea: 2002). Reviewing the situation in Nigeria, Ite (2004:1) acknowledged that that CSR “has a powerful potential to make positive contributions”, but warned that “there are ways in

which CSR could, whether by mistake or design, damage the same communities, politically, socially and economically”.

As the most dominant oil TNC in Nigeria, SPDC's corporate citizen tag also meant that Shell had a responsibility to partake in addressing the social and economic impact of its extractive activities on OBCs. SPDC began its earliest CSR activities in the 1960s. This time, the company supported efforts aimed at improving the livelihood of subsistence agrarian communities in the Niger Delta (Ite: 2007b:3). SPDC's CSR efforts can be categorised into three major phases: (i) Community Assistance (CA) 1960–1997; (ii) Community Development (CD) 1998–2002; and (iii) Sustainable Community Development (SCD) 2003–Present (Ite: 2007b:4).

Thriving objectives and justification of the three phases or policy changes were to enhance a higher mode of delivery of development to the grassroots of OBCs. Yet, such objectives are still very far from being achieved. In the late 1990s, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) began to increase its involvement in CSR activities. By 2004, Shell began the implementation of the ‘sustainable community development’ strategy, in its quest for, and journey towards, sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

#### **Phase (i): Community Assistance (CA) 1960–1997**

From 1960 to 1997, SPDC adopted a Community Assistance (CA) strategy with emphasis on corporate philanthropy as basic form of CSR (SPDC: 1998). Although mainly ad hoc and spontaneous development initiatives, CA was essentially about the provision of basic amenities like water and sanitation, health care, and roads to the host communities near Shell's oil exploration facilities. Project implementation targeted short term objectives because there were no long term coordinated plans. Ite (2007b:3) laments that the focus was simply driven by “what Shell felt the communities lacked, or on SPDC's perception of poverty within the communities”, and not on the real challenges confronting OBCs. As such, OBCs were more or less “helpless victims of circumstances rather than capable actors in the development process”. Ite also asserts that with time, “a dependency culture became established and the communities saw the development infrastructure provided by Shell not as charity, but as a form of rent for Shell's use (and abuse) of the environment and resources”. Consequently, OBCs were transformed into “passive recipients of Shell's donations”, and “resorted to demanding and expecting ‘development’ from Shell and other multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta” (Ite: 2007b:4).



SPDC's CA was a 'top-down' approach to development (Pirani, et al.: 2004). This is largely an ineffective approach to poverty alleviation. Due in part to this approach, the Nigerian palliatives failed woefully to deliver on the promise to OBCs. As a corporate citizen, there is no doubt that Shell has made several attempts to contribute in various ways to local community development in the Niger Delta. But a critical review of SPDC's strategies and policies on community development in the Niger Delta indicates that CA cultivated and encouraged "unsustainable development and a culture of dependency" (Ite: 2007b:1). SPDC's pioneer attempt at sustainable community development in the Niger Delta would have succeeded if ordinary people in OBCs had taken ownership and control of such projects.

UNDP (2002) has warned that one of the lessons that can be learn from the foregoing failures of poverty-focused interventions is the need to avoid the 'top-down' approach to project design and implementation because it invariably results in ineffectiveness of the interventions. In other words, SPDC placed emphasis on one-time 'gifts' to the communities, rather than support for long-term and sustainable development programmes. In the process, "the company responded mainly to a 'wish or shopping list' from the communities, rather than their real development priorities and actual needs" (Ite: 2007b:4).

### **Phase (ii): Community Development (CD) 1998–2002**

From 1998 and 2002, SPDC significantly jettisoned the CA mode for the Community Development (CD) approach. With CD, SPDC placed emphasis on the empowerment of communities in the developmental process. The view was to significantly reduce the dependency of OBCs on SPDC. It is important to interject here that SPDC's situation was made even more difficult by the execution of the Ogoni rights campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa and nine others. His execution raised the tempo of violence in the region. Apart from failure in its CA projects, continued protests and insecurity in the Niger Delta in the aftermath of Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution required that something drastic needed to be done to turn the tide. In other words "the oil industry's 'business horizon' in the Niger Delta will continue to contract; if current conflict trends continue uninterrupted" (WAC Services: 2003:6). It was in this social context that SPDC began to change its approach in an effort to repair community relations, because SPDC's 'social licence to operate' (SLO) was fast eroding (WAC Services: 2003). With the end of military rule on 29 May 1999, the drive to repair the SLO became very urgent and necessary. In the words of the International Crisis Group (2006c:12), "the bar was raised, and expectations of impoverished OBCs rose faster than the development efforts of the fledgling civilian government".

Therefore, SPDC's shift from the CA mode to Community Development (CD) approach was in part driven by damage done to its reputation by the execution which affected the company's share price and its ability to recruit and retain staff (Pirani, et al.: 2004:2). This forced Shell to make changes to its Community Assistance programme in the Niger Delta, which it renamed Community Development (CD), and to put in an enormous amount of resources and energy on Public Relations (PR) to counter the negative perceptions of the company worldwide (Pirani, et al.: 2004:2). For her internal audience, Community Development became the best alternative, yet it failed to improve relations with OBCs.

The CD approach embodied a drive by SPDC to invest in the social capital of OBCs, including their traditional knowledge, skills and adaptive strategies, and sought to ascertain changes and adjustments that people often make. Under the new approach, considerable impetus was placed on empowering communities to produce Community Development Projects (CDPs). The idea was to encourage full participation of all segments of the Niger Delta population (SPDC: 1999). This process was to be driven by SPDC's community development advisers vis-à-vis designated partners coming together to assist communities to assess their own development priorities and needs. Given that the new approach was to be coordinated to avoid the CA experience, CDPs were deliberately designed to solve the most acute socioeconomic and environmental problems as well as proffer an alternative comprehensive development programme. The objective was to address all dimensions of developmental challenges associated with poverty and especially women empowerment, income generation and health related issues.

Being a paradigm shift, the new approach provided both SPDC and OBCs "a unique opportunity for synergy, rational planning and cost efficiency" (Ite: 2007b:5, 2004). However, SPDC was unable to attain the original goals envisaged in the CD policy (SPDC, 2004a), because the CA model whose focus was on traditional corporate philanthropy operated side by side with the CD model. The consequence was that no single OBC could claim ownership, and it was not possible to sustain community projects without clear definition of ownership of participatory structures (Ite: 2007b:5). The most significant achievement of SPDC's CD programme remains the fact that CDPs were conceived as a bottom-up and not a top-down development approach (SPDC, 1999:2, SPDC: 2000).

Another recurring issue was that, despite increased investment in the CD model by SPDC, most of the projects were mini in nature and did not have wider coverage and developmental impacts on OBCs. Emphasis was placed on the number of projects and the required amount of resources was not invested for its sustainability. The consequences were

increase in the demand by communities for development projects. When it became obvious that such projects were not forthcoming, youth restlessness and insecurity intensified (WAC Global Services: 2003). WAC Global Services' expert baseline report became an instant wake-up call on Shell to take a critical look at its CD strategies because there was need for an "additional impetus" (Ite: 2007b:5). By 24 June 2004, violence and insecurity had peaked again (Pirani, et al.: 2004:7).

SPDC (2004b) was again forced by objective material circumstances to transform the CD model to a new approach called 'Sustainable Community Development' (SCD) (SPDC: 2004b).

### **Phase (iii): Sustainable Community Development 2003–Present**

Given the failure by CA and CD to deliver (SPDC, 2004b, 2004c), the Sustainable Community Development (SCD) paradigm began as the third phase in Shell's journey to address its social and economic responsibility to OBCs. The fundamental differences between the CD and SCD rest on conceptual framework. SCD places community participation as the core of its objective. In this sense, SPDC is committed to prompt guidance and monitoring of project implementation, while ensuring full participation and accountability of OBCs in the design and running of projects (SPDC, 2004b). Efforts were focused on supporting OBCs to build the capacity to generate sustainable wealth and income as a way towards economic progress and improvement in the quality of life. Put another way, SCD main objectives are to put OBCs the "driving seat" for their own development, with a view to enhancing the sustainability of development programmes and projects" (Ite: 2007b:5).

But the problem that was underrated by pioneers of the new approach, as part of a corporate social responsibility, is that CSR is a voluntary and not a legal mandate. CSR swings between volunteerism and obligation to OBCs. The significance of CSR to OBCs is to the extent that it increases pressure on oil TNCs to become more philanthropic and to claim ownership of the impacts of their extractive activities (Imbun: 2006:177). The question then is, have oil TNCs in the Niger Delta claimed ownership of the impacts of their extractive activities on OBCs? Has the deployment of CSR helped in understanding and addressing the specific complex social and economic impacts of oil on women in the Niger Delta? Is it possible that the CSR debate could have been brought to the fore as a strategy to blur our focus, and limit our discussion on the scope and magnitude of the social and economic impacts of oil in the Niger Delta?

These questions are very important because what constitutes CSR differs between and within countries. Swift and Zadek (2002) have argued that in most cases, the rhetoric on CSR seems to outstrip its practice. These questions are more particularly important to the problem of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta where oil workers abandon local women with 'fatherless' children and oil TNCs take no responsibility.

This complexity has also been acknowledged by the International Organisation for Standardisation Strategic Advisory Group on CSR. This informed why it gives a broad definition of (C) SR to "mean a balanced approach for organisations to address economic, social and environmental issues in a way that aims to benefit people, communities and society" (International Institute for Sustainable Development: 2004:4, quoted in Imbun: 2006:177). Lamenting the situation, Imbun (2006:177–178) states that TNCs have become:

...extraordinary powerful actors on the global scene with their influence spread far and wide. Their foreign direct investment (FDI) "between 1985 and 1990 increased at an annual rate of 30% and in the late 1990s inflow of FDI nearly doubled to \$350 billion...coupled with their massive economic power and political influence over host countries, MNCs seemed to have embraced CSR as a productive force to enhance their entrepreneurial success.

With specific reference to the focus of this study, we must admit that the CSR debate has led to increasing awareness on issues dealing with the extent to which oil contributes in the marginalisation of women in the Niger Delta. The debate has also generated what Ikelegbe (2005a:242) describes as "trickle down" benefits from oil Transnational Corporations (TNCs) to women. One such benefit derives from the pockets of capacity building and empowerment projects for Niger Delta women embarked upon by Shell Petroleum Development Company since the late 1990s (SPDC: 2002). However, little concerted attention has been paid to the "the deeper impact of the oil economy on the women who constitute a large proportion of subsistence farmers, fisher-women and the informal sector in the region" (Ikelegbe: 2005a:242).

Yet, it is in this fundamental social and economic foundation that the marginalisation of women in the Niger Delta is based, and can be studied and understood. It is also within the context of marginalisation that we can adequately interrogate the social and economic basis for the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers in the Niger Delta area. This aspect of the problem has either been under explored or overtaken by the spontaneous and erratic short-term 'trickle down' palliatives of women capacity building programmes, usually provided to a few selected local women groups by oil TNCs. For

instance, in the *People and the Environment Annual Report*, SPDC (2002:21) claimed to be one of the first to begin providing “women-driven projects”. SPDC (2002:18) also attests; “we began to move from community assistance to community development” which began in 1997, “in order to give communities more control of their own development”.

This approach continued to receive immense domestic and international media coverage in spotlighting abject human condition and environmental challenges in the Niger Delta. But the crux of the matter is that its focus is generic and does not look critically at the peculiar social and economic challenges confronting local women in the Niger Delta. While we may agree with SPDC (2002:21) that women in the Niger Delta suffer “disproportionately from the effects of underdevelopment” (SPDC: 2002:21), it is pertinent to point out that Shell’s focus does not address the fundamental ramifications of the effects of its oil extractive activities on women.

**Table 5.1.** Sex distribution of population in the Niger Delta states, 1991 (percent)

State	Male	Female
Abia	48.2	51.8
Akwa Ibom	48.5	51.5
Bayelsa	52.1	47.9
Cross River	50.0	50.0
Delta	49.1	50.9
Edo	50.0	50.0
Imo	46.9	53.1
Ondo	49.9	48.1
Rivers	51.9	48.1
Niger Delta	49.5	50.5

Source: Adapted from UNDP: 2006, page 26

**Table 5.2.** Absolute sex distribution of population in the Niger Delta states, 2006

State	Male	Female	Population
Abia	1,434,193	1,399,806	2,833,999
Akwa Ibom	2,044,510	1,875,698	3,920,208
Bayelsa	902,648	800,710	1,703,358
Cross River	1,492,465	1,396,501	2,888,966
Delta	2,074,306	2,024,985	4,098,391
Edo	1,640,461	1,577,871	3,218,332
Imo	2,032,286	1,902,613	3,934,899
Ondo	1,761,263	1,679,761	3,441,024
Rivers	2,710,665	2,474,735	5,185,400

Source: Federal Republic of Nigeria (2006), page 1.

For instance, from 1999 to 2002 SPDC set up eleven women development centres in some states in the Niger Delta region to train women in skill acquisition in bakery, sewing, hairdressing and soap making. By 2002, only 7,000 women were trained under the various capacity building schemes. Of women who were to be trained on income-generation and micro-credit projects, including food processing and preservation schemes, cargo transportation and retail trading, only 360 women were reported to have benefited (SPDC: 2002:21–22).

A glance at tables 5.1 and 5.2 gives us an idea of the female population in the Niger Delta and the likely impact of SPDC's palliatives on the women folk in the Niger Delta. Table 1.5 shows that in 1991 women constituted almost 50 percent of the population of the Niger Delta. States like Abia, Akwa Ibom, Delta and Edo and Imo seem to have more females than males. The 2006 National census figures however give the impression that there are slightly more males than females in the Niger Delta region (see Table 1.6). This tallies with the earlier projected report by the NDDC Regional Master Plan that there are about 54 percent males to 46 percent females in the Niger Delta (UNDP: 2006:24). The 1991 trend reverted back in 2007 and 2008 (Federal Republic of Nigeria: 2009). The 2009 Social Statistics Report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) presents percentage distribution of persons in household, disaggregated by sex, size and states; which shows that there is no significant difference between females and males in the Niger Delta region (Federal Republic of Nigeria: 2009:4).

Given that almost 50 percent of the Niger Delta population are females, analysis of the social and economic impact of palliatives must be placed vis-à-vis the absolute population of

women in the region. In other words, how much of an impact do all SPDC's community development projects actually make in a society? How much in monetary terms do these investments translate to, as a percentage of SPDC's gross or net bottom line? An extended analysis would therefore compare the absolute expenditure on palliatives with the total oil profits that accrued to SPDC within the same period. Even if we limit our analysis to SPDC's figure of 7,360 women beneficiaries of all her palliative projects from 1999 to 2002 and compare it with the absolute population of females in the Niger Delta region, SPDC's palliatives would look like a drop in the ocean.

Recent annual reports by Shell have not indicated any significant shift. In 2005, SPDC claimed that it spent \$107 million on "sustainable community development" (International Crisis Group (2006c:12). Yet its 2005 annual report merely stated that in the continuation of its 'Sustainable Community Development strategy', and to "increase community participation in projects, encourage local enterprises and partner with others, including development agencies", SPDC "spent a further \$32 million on its own community projects" (Royal Dutch Shell: 2005:26). The result according to the report was that "in 2005, there was an increase in the functionality and beneficiary ownership status of community projects" (Royal Dutch Shell: 2005:27).

One other problem with these reports is that very few details are usually provided. For instance, the 2005 report merely states that the Cassava Enterprise Development Programme, supported by USAID and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture, created jobs for about 1,000 people, and that about 200 kiosks were set up by women or youth entrepreneurs through SPDC's Telecoms Self-Employment programme with GLOBACOM, the Nigerian telecommunications provider (Royal Dutch Shell: 2005:26). Similarly, the 2009 report under the caption "sharing benefits with local communities" indicated that at peak construction of Shell's Afam and Gbaran-Ubie projects; 3,000 and 6,000 workers were employed respectively. About 95 percent of these workers were said to be Nigerians some of whom were trained in valuable skills like scaffolding and welding (Royal Dutch Shell: 2009:23). The same report also claimed without providing details:

Both projects have had a positive impact on the economy. Some \$1.5 billion of the total project budget for Gbaran-Ubie, for example, is being spent in Nigeria. More than 140 Nigerian companies have provided a range of services including dredging, the manufacture of equipment and plant components and transport. Local communities have benefited from a wide range of social development initiatives based on a new model, global memoranda of understanding (GMOU). Under these, communities

decide for themselves how to spend the development funds Shell provides. GMOU have helped launch a range of projects to construct schools, town halls and health clinics and improve fresh-water supplies. GMOU have also funded micro-credit schemes.

(Royal Dutch Shell: 2009:23).

It is no surprise then that SPDC's annual reports have always come under barrage of criticism for being "perfection in prevarication" and "an exercise artfully targeted at inundating the reader with large volumes of superficial, self seeking, 'trust us' information, designed to give the appearance of substance but which leave the discerning reader in a spurious state of confusion"<sup>63</sup>. Given that these 'annual sustainability reports' are not mere financial statements, it would be expected that such reports should capture or at least demonstrate the extent to which SPDC's activities truly integrate the collective aspirations of OBCs. On the contrary, these reports have tended to conceal the economic and financial performance of oil TNCs by not making public exactly their profits and how much of this was reinvested into the local economy of OBCs.

SPDC's funding of community development needs to be distanced from its commercial operations. This is because its community development programme seems to be closely tailored to coincide closely with the wish to continue to sustain SLO in communities where there is tension. In that sense, its 'community development' "appeared to solve short-term access problems but stored up greater troubles for the future" (Pirani, et al.: 2004:2-3). This partly explains why cases of incomplete and unsustainable projects have become trademarks and landmarks of the Niger. In the words the International Crisis Group (2006c:12), "white elephants – empty clinics and schools lacking staff or equipment, hulking, empty water towers with broken or missing pumps and pipes – are visible throughout the region".

This then explains why the few host communities where these few SPDC's community development projects are sited, jealously protect their position relative to their neighbours who may not be lucky. Communities without such projects would have no option but to attract attention by engaging in violent activities. For instance, a militant leader placed the problem in perspective thus: "Our people do not run away from violence any more. They run toward it. It has become normal for us. People know that they will not be allowed to enjoy the benefits of our oil unless they fight" (International Crisis Group: 2006c:14). To restore calm

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<sup>63</sup>See "Shell Nigeria's Sustainability Report 2002: A Critical Review", by Bankole Arowobusoye, in Nigeria Village Square, accessed on 30/12/2010, at: <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/articles/bankole-arowobusoye/shell-nigerias-sustainability-report-2002-a-critical-review-2.html>



from challenges such as the foregoing, SPDC (2002:22) had to mobilise the bulk of Niger Delta grassroots women and hold a 'successful national peace congress' on "women's peace building initiative" (SPDC: 2002:22).

### **5.3 SPDC'S AGENDA AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT CHALLENGE IN THE NIGER DELTA**

On the social and economic impact of oil on women in the Niger Delta, the foregoing demonstrates that there has been little or no commitment by SPDC to a comprehensive articulation and resolution of the socioeconomic challenges facing women in the Niger Delta. The main social and economic drivers in SPDC's agenda would seem to be, not on how to economically empower local women, but how to use them to bring about peace in the region so that the oil industry can run without disruptions. SPDC does this by propagating the role women play as food producers, home carers and peace makers. SPDC betrays itself thus: "apart from their traditional role of home keeper, they also account for up to 60 per cent of food production. Additionally, in most communities, women are an influential group through whom peace building and conflict resolution efforts can be enhanced" (SPDC 2002:21). Ikelegbe (2005a:243) succinctly provide the context thus:

...in the Niger Delta region, women who have become impoverished, marginalised and aggrieved in the oil economy have begun to engage in struggles for justice, accommodation and fair access to benefits through associational forms. Women groupings have not only become an active part of the civil challenge and popular struggles, but have begun to appropriate traditional forms of resistance. Moreover, women groupings relate not only to struggles for benefits, but also to the management of the conflict.

It would seem that SPDC wants to tap and turn women's intermittent "peaceful mass actions" (Ikelegbe: 2005a:242) in the region to her advantage. This largely explains why SPDC's efforts have been on constructing and strengthening peace building capacity in relation to the resolution of the conflict by both the MNCs and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who have begun to focus on the roles that adequately equipped women and women groupings can play in the resolution of the complex, multilevel and multifaceted conflicts and crises in the region (Ikelegbe: 2005a:242). The crux of the matter is that Shell has been able to alert and orientate other oil TNCs, the Nigerian state, including civil society, scholars and activists to "the role of women and their groupings in the struggle and in its resolution" (Ikelegbe: 2005a:242).

At this juncture, a couple of questions can be asked. To what extent have panaceas, palliatives and relief projects by oil companies and the Nigerian states addressed or even understood women's specific socioeconomic predicament and the anatomy of their survival strategies in the Niger Delta? Why have sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers emerged to become an attractive survival alternative or strategy open to local Niger Delta women? Put in another way, what factors are responsible for the emergence of sexual liaison as a survival strategy amongst women in the Niger Delta? What are the characteristics of local women most likely to be involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers?

The thesis in this study holds that the integration of women into the analysis of the Niger Delta raises fundamental questions beyond Shell's annual reports' dictum of "sharing benefits with local communities". These reports do not always ask about the real social and economic living conditions of women in the Niger Delta over the period reported? Given the human challenges posed to OBCs by oil, it is important to know the survival strategies that women have been forced to adopt by an oil enclave economy that has alienated them and their communities over the years. For a resolution of the Niger Delta problem to be possible, our focus should not just be on the role of women as peace makers. Rather, an analysis that interrogates the ramifications of the effects of survival strategies adopted by women is needed.

Our understanding of effects should be both at the level of the individual women involved in the liaisons as well as the impact of sexual liaisons on OBCs.

Since the 1990s, violent conflicts in Sub-Saharan African countries have been linked to contestations over natural resources. This remains a paradox where resource-rich African countries are plagued by widespread poverty, primitive accumulation by the ruling elite, maladministration, political instability and wars (Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law: 2000; International Crisis Group: 2006a; Obi: 2008b; Open Society Institute: 2005; Palley: 2003; Renner: 2004:2, 2006; Robinson et al.: 2006). Hydrocarbon mineral deposits and other natural resource wealth have failed to lead to development in resource rich African countries. Rather, natural resource revenue feeds into corruption and fuels violent conflicts (International Crisis Group: 2006b, WAC Global Services: 2003). But, consistent blame heaped on 'resource curse' trajectories has only contributed in blurring our analytical search lights. This study is a shift from 'resource curse' courses by focusing on the specific dialectical and material basis for the problem in the Niger Delta.

Given the central role played by the Niger Delta in Nigeria's political economy and regional security, this study is a major challenge to peace and development in the region. A major escalation of the Niger Delta debacle could destabilise the country and the neighbouring sub-regions (West and Central Africa) and impact negatively on the fragile peace in regional neighbouring post-conflict countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire (Obi: 2008b). An understanding of how sexual liaison plays into the dynamics of this problem will provide policy suggestions aimed at providing a framework for resolution. Findings from this study would form part of the ongoing interventions aimed at peace building and de-escalating conflict in the Niger Delta region and beyond.

In the Niger Delta, women, adolescent girls and the youth comprise a powder keg. Unable to get proper schooling or stable employment, they constitute a 'reserve army' for social discontent. Frustration associated with aspiration makes women and the youth of the Niger Delta very volatile and cynical towards overtures by the Nigerian state, oil TNCs and the International community. If differences of gender inequality and class are addressed, a productive community relations and conflict resolution system would be facilitated in the Niger Delta. Over the years, economic reform policies and programs designed and directed by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and implemented by the Nigerian governments have continued to ignore the differential impacts on men and women. Decision-making mechanisms in the country have continued to turn a 'blind-eye' to the need to factor in specific socioeconomic challenges confronting Nigerian women (Afonja: 1986, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c,). The significance of this study is that it seeks to address women specific challenges in the Niger Delta.

## **5.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter interrogates palliatives put in place to alleviate poverty in the Niger Delta and comes to the conclusion that these palliatives have failed to deliver. Shell's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative is not fundamentally different to the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). It is within the following context that we can locate why the United States and her European allies have come up with a drive to pursue what they regard as "sustained, high-level engagement to promote transparency and reform in West and Central Africa, with special emphasis upon Nigeria and Angola" (Goldwyn and Morrison: 2004:7). Several initiatives have been put in place. These include Tony Blair's Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), and the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR), the G-8 Transparency Initiative Evian Declaration on Fighting Corruption

and Improving Transparency, the Publish What You Pay Campaign by George Soros and the Open Society Institute; and the African Union's New Partnership for Africa – NEPAD (Goldwyn and Morrison: 2004:7).

Similarly, the National Energy Policy Development (NEPD) group (Turshen: 2004:1–2) went further to recommend that the US President direct the Secretaries of State, Energy and Commerce to reinvigorate the U.S. African Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum and the U.S. African Energy Ministerial process. The objective was to help facilitate the deepening of bilateral and multilateral engagements to promote a more receptive environment for the U.S. quest for oil and gas trade, investment and operations. Given challenges in the Middle East supplies, these would promote geographic diversification of US energy supplies, while at the same time addressing U.S. deceptive concept of transparency, sanctity of contracts, security and broad based international Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) measures to solve conflicts in resource endowed countries in the Gulf of Guinea.

A critical review of oil TNCs' approach to the concept and practice of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), does not represent anything really new. What it does represent is a new plethora of nonbinding international voluntary initiatives that oil TNCs are encouraged to sign up. These 'new' initiatives which began with Tony Blair's flagship project; the EITI and the VPSHR are nonbinding. Such nonbinding initiatives provide a buffer to oil TNCs and mining multinational companies to circumvent mandatory International Conventions and regulations. What these nonbinding voluntary initiatives do is that Western governments, inter-governmental organisations and NGOs popularise, drive and encourage camouflage or normative debate and response on issues of human rights protection in oil producing countries. Beneath the camouflage is what Gerlach<sup>64</sup> refers to as "the real politick on global energy security," which in real sense "promotes an unregulated oil industry in which the securing of oil is the prime objective".

Even if these initiatives have good intentions, their nonbinding nature means that they cannot be taken seriously. An analogy can also be drawn from the activities and role of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) and its implications for the African continent (Gilbert, et al.: 2009:264–266, 273–277). AFRICOM is part and parcel a U.S. agency purporting to bring transparency, check incidents of insurgency and guarantee security in Africa in general and oil producing countries in particular. This fact has indeed been captured thus:

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<sup>64</sup>. See: Gerlach, I. (2008): *Oil and the Gulf of Guinea*, The Centre for Investigative Journalism, accessed 0on: 09/09/2010, at: <http://www.tcij.org/training-material/oil-and-the-gulf-of-guinea>

There are many parts to producing transparency, and UK, U.S., and other efforts can and should be complementary, not competitive. The task force specifically proposes that a special adviser to the U.S. president and secretary of state for Africa energy diplomacy be designated to lead the interagency policy. It calls for an annual African energy summit, expanded peacekeeping training and International Military Education and Training (IMET) support, and expanded maritime security programs.

(Goldwyn and Morrison: 2004:7).

Like both EITI and VPSHR, the real objective and purpose of AFRICOM is not yet open to the population in those African states that have signed for it. The foregoing neoliberal Western rhetoric has been described as “imperial oil” Watts (2006:14–17) that charts “the road to serfdom” (Watts: 2006:4–6) for many Africans, as well as possessing the potential to lead to an outbreak of “neoliberal tsunami” backlash with a “dreadful ferocity on the African cities, and the African slum” (Watts: 2006:6–9). Ibeanu (2002a:163) is worried that while the international community has demonstrated great solidarity with OBCs in the Niger Delta, international entities “the likes of Shell, Chevron, Mobil, the New York Stock Exchange and policy makers in Washington have fuelled the rape of the Niger Delta”.

## **PART II**

### **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SEXUAL LIAISONS IN THE NIGER DELTA: (FIELD RESEARCH REPORT)**

#### **CHAPTER 6: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DYNAMICS OF SEXUAL LIAISONS IN THE NIGER DELTA**

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##### **6 INTRODUCTION**

Using participants' narratives, this chapter and others that follow it seek to understand the socioeconomic context and cultural dynamics of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between expatriate male oil company workers and local women in the Niger Delta. Participants were asked generic questions as a way to ascertain what factors they think are responsible for the phenomenon of sexual liaisons, and how this problem is perceived and understood by local communities, family members and women/girls involved in the practice. This chapter and those that follow present data derived from qualitative interviews conducted with research participants and ethnographic observations made on the field. Specific foci of the field work investigate the social and economic factors that drive women and young school girls, and even older women, into sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. Participants' narratives attest to the fact that dominant commentary on the Niger Delta debacle has largely been indifferent and has in most cases ignored the ordeals of women as victims of sexual liaisons, which are in the first place orchestrated by the enclivity of the oil economy. Participants also observe that the abandonment of local women with bi-racial 'fatherless' children constitutes one of the major social outcomes.

Issues interrogated in this chapter dwell on participants' opinions on how sexual liaison evolves and intersects with the oil enclave economy in the Niger Delta. The chapter discusses

the extent to which oil enclave economy in the Niger Delta creates income inequality and motivates expatriate oil workers to freely and enthusiastically engage in sexual liaisons with poor local women without responsibility. Participants' narratives also take a critical look at ways in which the low income status of local women puts them in a very weak position and makes it difficult and for them to negotiate sexual rights with foreign oil workers. The chapter also shows that the vantage position of foreign oil workers is further enhanced by the nonchalant attitude of the Nigerian state and its unwritten *laissez-faire* immigration policy towards foreign oil companies and expatriate oil workers.

There is a convergence of opinions by participants that the woes suffered by local Niger Delta women is partly a function of Nigerian state policies, which have over the years tended to protect foreign oil companies and their expatriate workers from prosecution. The identities of expatriate oil workers which are in the custody of the Nigerian immigration department, are not always available to aggrieved local women who have either been abandoned with bi-racial 'fatherless' children or have been given fake identities by their former expatriate sexual liaison partners. This situation makes it extremely difficult for local women who are victims of sexual exploitation to seek any form of legal redress for child support from the Nigeria state or in the overseas countries where these workers came from. This chapter observes that because sexual liaison practice is voluntary and regarded as illegal, the Nigerian state takes no responsibility. It is therefore almost impossible for these women and girls to contemplate suing the Nigerian state for any form of compensation.

It is pertinent to reiterate that questions for this study were semi-structured. As stated in the methodology chapter, before the start of all interview sessions, participants were adequately introduced to the ramifications of the research objectives and questions. Introduction was done in ways to enhance participants' robust understanding of the subject of investigation as well as to stimulate their responses to issues raised. On the basis of participants' responses to initial questions asked; follow-up probing questions were asked. Participants' narratives and line of thinking guided the wording of follow-up or probing questions. The first form of investigation was to ask series of questions on the social and economic profile of women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. Participants were therefore asked to give an outline of the social and economic backgrounds of Niger Delta women/girls likely to engage in sexual liaisons with foreign oil workers.

This chapter therefore presents participants' perception and understanding of the intricacies surrounding the social dynamics of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. As stated elsewhere, scholarly and public opinion attention has been given to issues such oil, revenue,

environment, politics, and power that accrue to those who control crude oil, and most recently, unlimited youth restlessness in the region. This chapter therefore shifts the debate by investigating salient challenges posed by the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and how it affects the day-to-day life of Niger Delta individuals, families and communities. The phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta has been relatively obscured from popular debate, partly due to the fact that its activities are clandestine and highly concealed from those who are not involved. The practice itself cannot be said to be mainstream prostitution. This is because women and school girls involved always hope to get expatriate husbands in the process.

Our qualitative data however indicates that while some of them have been lucky to marry expatriate husbands, others have had to make do with material or monetary gifts from their expatriate sexual partners. Yet still, a significant majority have virtually been abandoned as single mothers with bi-racial 'fatherless' children to care for. Unfortunately too, some of these bi-racial children are marginalised and neglected because they are regarded as 'fatherless' and as aberrations to the family institution.

Part one of this study articulates the connection between oil extractive activities and the dispossession of women. Synchronising both the literature review and qualitative data collected from the field, this chapter demonstrates that the effects of such dispossessions result in the disappearance of women's subsistence occupations and local sources of income generation, and have pushed women into the oppression system of sexual liaison which itself violates their reproductive rights.

## **6.1 SOCIOECONOMIC BASIS OF SEXUAL LIAISONS IN THE NIGER DELTA**

Sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers are not mainstream prostitution or direct transactional exchanges of sex for money. The practice of prostitution has been associated with British colonial history in Nigeria. Female prostitution or the exchange of sex for money otherwise known as *ashawo work* in Nigeria became phenomenal with the advent of colonial urbanisation, and "the sexual habits of the colonists" (Naanen: 1991:1) led to an increasingly monetary economy where sex could be bought like any other commodity. Naanen (1991:61–62) explains the differences between commercial prostitution and sexual liaisons by stating that "prostitution is the commoditization of sex, the sale of a specific form of leisure and biological service". An important element in the political economy of colonial capitalism and prostitution is that "the presence of stranger elements" and the "intrusion of non agrarian forces such as sedentary or migrant labour and modern



commerce” became social and economic catalysts behind the exchange of sex for money or material gifts.

According to Naanen (1991:61–62), “illegitimate sexual liaisons were not unknown” in pre-colonial Africa, “but they did not occur on a commercial basis, mainly because of the absence of these exogenous forces”. He continued thus; “economic forces apart, the high degree of political decentralization, which ensured that effective political organisation did not transcend the village level... and the multiplicity of mutually antagonistic ethno-linguistic groups combined to hinder the free movement of people and the development of those social forces that are integral to the growth of prostitution”. The commercialisation of sex was only made possible “when the Cross River area was conquered and brought under British rule between 1888 and 1909”, and when “male emigration occasioned by the demand for forced labour during the colonization process, enhanced security, and the growth of merchant capital all contributed to changes in sexual relations”. Naanen also states that local accounts by elders of the Upper Cross River communities blame prostitution on the “advent of the white man.”

Colonial capitalism did not only herald the emergence of prostitution in Nigeria, but its expansionist structure ensures that both rural and urban peripheral sectors of the Nigerian economy are fed into the metropolitan capitalist economy of Europe. The Nigerian oil sector which took over from its agricultural predecessor has not been anything different. The only difference is that sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers do not operate in a conventional sex for money exchange. While considerable scholarly attention has been accorded female prostitution or transactional exchange of sex for money, the phenomenon of unconventional or non transactional sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers has not attracted similar scholarly studies. Participants’ narrative in this chapter shows that despite the raging violence in the Niger Delta, mass influx of expatriates into the region have continued to lead to a noticeable impact on the volume and mode of operation of non-transactional sexual liaisons in many different ways than ever imagined. One of our research participants sums up the difference between conventional female prostitution and sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta thus; “*ashawo work* with foreign oil workers and our local women is not real *ashawo work*, it is like a boy friend and girl friend, like a husband and wife; it has come to stay, and there is nothing we can do to stop it. The only problem is that it has serious negative effects on our women”.

Another participant points to the fact that from the outset when oil was discovered in the Niger Delta, oil companies moved into rural communities with all manner of machinery,

cars, heavy trucks, earth moving machines, and heavy electricity generators. Suddenly, all these activities lit up the skies. These expatriate workers worked day and night, running shifts because oil exploration is not something that is done in the day and closed in the evening. It is a 24 hour business. With such simultaneous activities, everywhere brightens up and human society is gingered-up. The local communities stand aside and watch as events unfold in their backyard. For lack of skills, the only jobs that were open to the locals were menial jobs like night watchmen, security work, messengers, cleaners, cooks, laundry services and etc. These jobs are physical in nature, and those usually employed are mostly men. An insignificant number of female workers are usually employed to do laundry and catering services. Given that the oil enclave economy is structurally skewed against employing women, the stage was therefore set for the emergence and flourishing of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers.

The literature reviewed in previous chapters of this study, our field observations and participants' narrative all call attention to the relationship between oil extraction, environmental degradation and dispossession of women. This dialectical linkage is responsible for social and economic dislocations which push women into sexual liaisons with foreign expatriate workers in the first place. The strength of these dialectical linkages shows that oil induced environmental degradation and dispossession of women in the Niger Delta affects their gender as well as their reproductive rights. This is because those who "really care about environmental justice"<sup>65</sup>, should also care about the reproductive rights of indigenous women whose daily survival depends on the sustainable rhythm of the environment and its embedded natural resources.

During the field work, we tried to make sense of participants' perspectives on the social and economic basis for the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. Though participants' perceptions vary, there was convergence of views on the fact that problems associated with sexual liaisons have never attracted the attention of the Nigerian state. The refusal by the Nigerian state to openly acknowledge the existence of this problem, or to design measures to check its socioeconomic effects, goes to show that OBCs do not form a strategic component of oil policy. It was the considered view of some participants that if the Nigerian state could not pay adequate attention to environmental degradation, development and welfare of the Niger Delta people, it would amount to a luxury to expect its policy

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<sup>65</sup>. See: *If You Really Care about Environmental Justice, You Should Care about Reproductive Justice*, published by the National Women's Law Centre and Law Students for Reproductive Justice, accessed on: 07/22/2010, at: <http://nwlc.org/pdf/FactSheetEnvironmentalJusticeandReproJustice.pdf>

makers to pay attention to a salient and individualised problem such as the phenomenon of sexual liaisons.

The scope of participants' narratives on the intricacies and challenges pose by sexual liaison in the Niger Delta can be captured at three critical levels. These levels include the individual, family, and community. At the individual level, participants' narrative focuses on the individual woman, girl or lady involved in sexual liaison with foreign oil workers. The narrative holds that in their drive to meet their immediate material needs, or the hope of consummating marital vows with foreign expatriates and the possibility of travelling to Europe, North America or Asia, some of these women enter into sexual relationships without taking a second look ahead at embedded social costs that await them either now or in the near future.

A participant asked this rhetorical question: "do our families and communities really understand what *ashawo* (sexual liaison) with foreign oil workers entails for the present and even the future?" In response to this rhetorical question, the same participant suggests that given that "our values are part and parcel of our natural environment, families and communities need to come to terms with the problem, because the problem intersects with what we do and who we are as a people in the Niger Delta". The conclusions that can be deduced from the perspective of this participant is that the long term social implications of sexual liaisons are yet to be analytically appreciated and understood, or policy solutions proffered. Another participant points to the fact that "for young women, who represent the future of the Niger Delta, to perceive *ashawo* (sexual liaison) with foreign oil workers as an alternative means of survival is not only a threat but a reflection that our society is in crisis with its past, the present and the future". The same participant opined that the problem is a time bomb and that measures should be put in place to check its impact on our people.

Some community leaders identify that traditional institutions including families have not been able to collectively address the challenges posed by problems associated with sexual liaisons. This in part explains why responses to curb the challenges have rather been at the individual level. In this case, the women involved are left alone to manage the consequences. As we shall see in the later part of this chapter, women involved in sexual liaisons are individually blamed for the problem. We also discovered during our ethnographic field work that lamentations on the social challenges posed by sexual liaisons with expatriates have also been depicted by the world of arts in the Niger Delta. Such artistic expressions are usually displayed in different art forms, puppet plays and carvings. Anderson and Peek (2002:12) placed the debate in perspective thus:

Few realize that the region's arts rival the drama of its environment, history, and politics, for its reputation as an inhospitable swamp long discouraged all but a few adventurous outsiders from investigating its cultural traditions. Only the Kalabari Ijo, whose fascinating carved memorial screens and brilliant masquerades can hardly be regarded as typical, have secured a prominent spot in surveys of African art. "Ways of the Rivers: Arts and Environment of the Niger Delta" seeks to redress that imbalance by demonstrating that Niger Delta peoples have produced some of the finest figurative sculpture and masks in all of Africa.

(Anderson and Peek: 2002:12)

The history and sociocultural challenges posed by sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta economy and society have therefore been adequately captured by fascinating art works in what Anderson and Peek (2002:25) describe as "carved memorial screens and brilliant masquerades" In their work, *Ways of the Rivers: Arts and Environment of the Niger Delta*, Martha Anderson and Philip Peek demonstrate that, more than any other people in Africa, the Niger Delta peoples have produced some of the finest figurative sculpture and masks that mirror the social and economic challenges posed to them by both the natural environment and foreign invaders who come to trade and exploit their natural resources.

During our ethnographic sojourn among Oron communities in Akwa Ibom state, the research team were taken to the National Museum in Oron to buttress the extent to which the impact of the oil economy has had on Oron culture and women's sexuality. At the museum we were shown puppet carvings. One of the curators in the Museum who took us round told the research team that puppet plays have been used by artists to lament the scourge of sexual misadventures throughout the Niger Delta. The curator also explains that puppet plays and art works mirror the social ills and cultural abominations. Some of the ills that are usually highlighted include teen age pregnancy and having children outside wedlock. The curator acknowledged thus: "the oil economy has destroyed our cultural values and heritage because the race for oil money has taken a centre stage of life and defines the 'good things' of life". He concludes that, "the 'good things' of life are detrimental to the good cultural orderliness of our economy and society". An undated official document published by the National Museum, Oron which we obtained from the curator corroborated the significance of puppet plays thus:

Puppets personified certain offences or vices such as adultery, abortion, theft and greed, or they portrayed the members of an extended family, or perhaps personalities such as District Commissioner, lawyer, Hausa trader, tax collector, churchman and harlot... The primary aim of puppet plays was comic entertainment,

but they were also intuitions of social control, for moral transgressors were identified and became the butt of dramatic satire.<sup>66</sup>

On exhibition and display at the museum during our ethnographic research visits in April 2008, were several puppet carvings. Plates 6.1 to 6.3 are examples of some of the puppets.



**Plate 6.1** Carving of a mother with a child.

Source: Field Work, National Museum Oron, April 2008

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<sup>66</sup>. See: National Museum Oron (undated): *Guide to National Museum Oron, Oron Local Government, Akwa Ibom state*, page 28, Foreword by Ekpo Eyo (Director of Antiquities).



**Plate 6.2** Carving of a single woman

Source: Field Work, National Museum Oron, April 2008



**Plate 6.3** Carving of bulging breasts of an adolescent girl

Source: Field Work, National Museum, Oron, April 2008

The third puppet (see Plate 6.3) depicts breasts of an adolescent girl in the shape of eyes bulging from eye sockets hooked to a bald head of an old man, as symbolic comment on intergenerational sexual liaison.

The museum curator noted that these puppets are reminders of the impact as well as legacy of expatriates on the changing landscape of sexuality, marriage and family system in the Niger Delta. He concludes, “these puppets should be preserved for generations yet unborn, to keep reminding our young women of the negative effects of sexual liaisons with foreign oil workers. A participant complained: “some of these foreign oil workers are very old; in some cases they could be twice or three times the age of their Nigerian sexual partners and this has implications on the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the Niger Delta”.

Women participants involved in sexual liaisons were asked to express their take on the three puppet art works. They acknowledge that other local musicians and artists have written local songs criticising the problem of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriates, but complained that some of these artists merely lament and criticise but never provide solutions. Participants also complained that one common feature of artistic forms, puppet plays, and satirical music on sexual liaisons dwells heavily on highlighting the phenomenon of the big age difference between young women and relatively older expatriate oil workers. Participants opined that age is not the problem, but the reward system in Nigeria is. They argue that artists should also depict how economic deprivation forces young women to scramble for expatriate oil workers. Other participants delved into the contested issue of ‘resource control’ and Nigeria’s lopsided Federal system of government, the unjust revenue allocation formula, and the role played by some greedy community leaders in the Niger Delta. Their conclusion is that all these factors collectively contribute to aggravate the problem of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. A participant opined thus:

Look, our reward system is corrupting. What do you reward and what do you punish? Another issue is the instrumentality of the reward system. What is the relationship between the reward and the action? – What is the relationship between corruption and punishment? Poverty is a product or function of the Nigerian reward system. This is because people who work hard in Nigeria do not get good return on their work. *Ashawo* work with an expatriate oil worker pays a Nigerian female university graduate better than formal wage work. Just like the oil industry, Nigeria’s reward system favours only politicians most of whom are men. This is a social and economic fact that should be acknowledged by you researchers.

Given that it is women who engage in sexual liaison with male expatriate oil company workers, the phenomenon of sexual liaisons is therefore gender-specific. Besides being gender-specific and that they affect largely women and their ‘fatherless’ children, sexual

liaisons are not only intricately linked with the oil economy, but are also about reproductive justice. Loretta Ross defines reproductive justice as:

...the ability of any woman to determine her own reproductive destiny is directly linked to the conditions in her community and these conditions are not just a matter of individual choice and access. Reproductive justice is an intentional impulse to shape the competing ideals of equality and the social reality of inequality. Reproductive justice points out the inequality of opportunity in controlling our reproductive destiny<sup>67</sup>.

After we had concluded that the problem of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta is gender-specific because it involves local women and expatriate male oil workers, we were taken aback when a key informant took us to a man who wanted to share his own story and life experience with the researcher. In the process of his sojourn in the 'oil city' of Port-Harcourt for over twenty years, this man said he came in contact with an expatriate lady from Europe who worked in an oil company. He said he had two children (a boy and a girl) with the lady. But about five years ago, the lady left Nigeria for Europe with their daughter without telling him. He was left to cater for his son. He confessed that given his unemployment status, it has been extremely difficult to provide for his 'motherless' son. The researcher was given permission by the father to interview the boy, but he did not respond to our questions. His father tried to persuade him to talk to us but to no avail. All he could say was that he is longing to see his sister and mother. The fact that his father is unemployed may in part explain why the boy has low esteem. This may also explain why he is desperate to find his mother, as finding his mother could turn around his life's fortune.

## **6.2 PROFILE OF WOMEN INVOLVED IN SEXUAL LIAISONS**

During the mapping of residential and geo-locations of women involved in sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta, we found that most of them live in what can be describe as unsafe and cramped structures in drug and crime prone areas. Given the effects of hyper-inflation and high cost of accommodation in the 'oil cities' of the Niger Delta, most of these women live in neighbourhoods that do not have adequate security and protection by law enforcement agencies. The human environment in these locations is polluted by organic decay, due to the

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<sup>67</sup>See Loretta J. Ross (2006) page 2: *Understanding Reproductive Justice*, published by SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective, accessed on: on: 07/16/2010. at: [http://www.sistersong.net/publications\\_and\\_articles/Understanding\\_RJ.pdf](http://www.sistersong.net/publications_and_articles/Understanding_RJ.pdf)



lack of basic infrastructure and social services. The structural setting for the residents of these women can best be described as make-shift and nomadic because they live highly mobile life styles. Their mobility is informed by constant pursuit of what participants describe as 'hustling', 'runs', 'hunt' or searches for expatriate male oil company workers.

On the literacy level, most women and girls involved in sexual liaisons have at least attended one form of secondary education or the other. Some did confess that they dropped out of secondary school. While some had tertiary education, others were either university undergraduates or have graduated from university but were unemployed at the time of our field research (December 2007–May 2008). One other important finding of our field work is that most of these women and girls have a relatively good command of spoken English. The majority are from poor economic backgrounds. One of them stressed: "blame poverty, don't blame us".

The background chapters of this study have shown that the level of poverty in the Niger Delta is relatively higher than in other regions of Nigeria because of several factors. One of the major factors is hyper inflation wrought on the region by the oil enclave economy. Others include pollution of land and water, which were the main sources of subsistence for the majority of rural inhabitants. These factors are indeed capable of pushing poor women into unconventional alternative sources of survival.

Participants also acknowledged that undergraduate girls come as far as from the Northern part of the country into Port Harcourt and other 'oil cities' in the Niger Delta to scramble or hustle for expatriate oil workers and sailors. A participant elaborates on the profile of women involved sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers thus:

I can assure you that here in Port Harcourt married women also hustle for foreign oil workers. I know a man who had to divorce his wife because of her penchant for foreign oil workers. The only difference between unmarried women and married women in the hustling business is that most married women observe high degree of secrecy. Married women also keep to one expatriate man at a time. It is only when the man is not forth coming in solving their problems that they start to hustle for a new relationship. This is because the relationship is strictly on the material assistance the woman can derive. You don't call this love because there is nothing like love attached to it. Oil workers have their money and are ever ready to spend it on any woman they so admire. When a married woman makes up her mind to go into hustling, all that she wants is to make ends meet. Some married women in this category are usually those who have links with staff in oil servicing companies in Port Harcourt. They then use such links to get to newly posted expatriate workers.

While participants' narratives on the profile of women involved in sexual liaisons could be said to be diverse, there are key issues which keep recurring in all their stories. These include economic status, family background and family history. Participants' acknowledge the involvement of underage or secondary school girls, married women and women that are 45 years or above. There is an admission by participants that age plays little or no significant push factor for sexual liaison. This also corroborates with the artistic portrayal in preceding puppet carvings. Participants also agreed that the majority of Niger Delta women are pushed into sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers due to poverty or other economically related challenges, as well as the desire to marry an expatriate that can help improve their living condition.

It was also the considered view of participants that family members of women involved sexual liaisons may not be comfortable, but such family members are not in position to provide alternative income generation or other sources of employment. Participants also argue that it is the inability of parents or husbands to provide basic family needs that pushes such women into sexual liaisons in the first place. Just as Naanen (1991) found that most female prostitutes involved in the exchange of sex for money belong to the lowest socioeconomic stratum of society, participants agreed that most women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers are from a low economic background.

During our interview sessions, marital status became a contested area as most women and girls involved in sexual liaisons were not ready to entertain questions that probe on issues dealing with marriage. Even those who were interviewed by telephone did not respond to questions that probed into their marital status. It should be added that given the invisibility, negative moral connotation and stigma accorded the phenomenon of sexual liaisons, women involved in the practice try as much as possible to conceal their marital status. It was therefore extremely difficult to elicit information on marital status because participants were reluctant to discuss their marital status or admit that they were married.

For some participants responding to the question on marital status would mean admitting that they are involved in extra-marital affairs. Others express fear that if their husband finds out that would mean the end of their marriage. In the words of a participant; "my husband will divorce me". While this may certainly be responsible for the high refusal rate to response to our enquiries on marital status, it is also true that in reality most married women in Nigeria are less likely to become involved in sexual activities or have additional partners outside their husbands. One fundamental reason for this is cultural. Nigeria is largely a communal and a family centred society. In Nigeria there is simply no space for additional

male partners in the life of a married woman. Whether in rural or urban areas, the absence of a married woman in a Nigerian family even if for a short while is immediately felt. Residents and families care about the activities of their next door neighbours and will always get to know what a married woman neighbor is doing. It is this social setting that can partly explain why some of our participants, whom we shall call 'puritans', consider women involved in sexual liaisons as 'driven by moral disorder' regardless of whether they are married or not.

On the economic status or family background of women involved in sexual liaisons, some participants disputed the generally held perception that women involved in sexual liaisons are from an impoverished family background. Instances of young school girls, women including even married women from relatively comfortable economic backgrounds engaging in sexual liaisons with foreign oil workers were cited. The driving force for this category of women is not just the economic factor. Rather, other intervening variables are responsible for the involvement in sexual liaisons by this category of women and girls. What we are saying is that although the main driver behind the scramble for expatriate oil workers and sailors by local women remains the dispossession of local women by an alienating enclave oil economy, participants also acknowledge the existence of other social intervening variables that cannot be regarded as purely economic.

These intervening variables range from 'the drive to catch fun', to the desire to marry an expatriate with the hope of being 'taken abroad'. Although women in this category may not be well educated, some were undergraduates and some had tertiary education including university degrees. Some who were underage girls were said to have dropped out of high fee paying schools. According to a participant:

Some of these underage girls do not necessarily come from poor homes. Some take to *ashawo* with foreign oil workers as means to be like other 'big girls' who have gone into it and successfully got married to expatriates. There is therefore considerable peer pressure on adolescent girls to emulate those who have 'successfully' gone out with foreign oil workers.

On the emulation of those who have been 'successful', there were other women who said that they had formal employment but went into 'hustling' for expatriate oil workers and sailors because "we were searching for husbands and the possibility to augment our living conditions and that of our families". Assertions by these participants are reminiscent of Naanen's (1991:64) findings that prostitutes under the colonial economy in Obubra Division (southeast Nigeria) were not only "rich and influential as individuals", but "became probably

the most important source of accumulation in Obubra Division”. Naanen showed that the verifiable remittances alone (i.e., excluding un-verifiable remittances such as cash inflows such as those sent through people visiting home and visiting relatives, or cash taken along by the prostitutes themselves when they made home visits or returned for good) from prostitutes into Obubra Division, accounted for more than double the public revenue in the division. He also observes that their remittances contributed to strengthening domestic family economic support, setting-up business for the women and even their brothers, building of new houses, and other forms of support for family members. Naanen (1991:64) concludes that it would appear that “non-verifiable remittances probably outweighed the verifiable ones”.

The drive by women towards emulating those who have been ‘successful’ also accounts for why the practice persists despite its risks. This is the way a participant describes the paradox of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta: “in every society, success counts. Some communities are always keen to receive money brought back by their ‘successful’ daughters in the city. That is seen as a mark of prosperity in the community. Some families and communities do not ask questions about how their daughters come about the money. But when the daughter contracts a disease, or gets impregnated and abandoned by a foreign oil worker, it becomes a personal problem for the daughter to manage”. These are some of the challenges facing the family system in the Niger Delta.

In *The Changing African Family Project: A Report with Special Reference to the Nigerian Segment*, Okediji (et al.: 1976:127) found that despite “major economic, social, and educational changes” during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nigeria still remains a traditional society with strong attachment to family values. Attachment to family values is responsible for why the Nigerian family system has been able to survive onslaught by both Western values of individualism, single parenthood and cultural imperialism. Okediji (et al.: 1976:127) explains thus:

The first is the fact that budgetary obligations still extend well beyond the nuclear family. The second is that the lifetime net flow of wealth is even now from the older to the younger generation.

In a related study, Adegbola and Babatola (1999) examine “premarital and extramarital sex in Lagos” and posit that social and economic challenges brought by globalisation and economic changes in the Nigerian economy and society create a network “that cuts across numerous divides” with a tendency to influence family “traditionally-held norms and values on sexual relationships”. Paraphrasing an original finding by Orubuloye’s (et al.: 1994a, b)

study of “sexual networking” in Ondo state, Adegbola and Babatola (1999:20) state that: “females’ sexual activity, irrespective of marital status, is generally condoned as long as it brings economic benefits. For married women, such benefits should translate to better welfare, primarily for their children, and then for the home as a whole. For the spinster, the rationale lies in the need to meet her educational expenses which she may find difficult to obtain by other means. Such a pattern suggests that economic factors may encourage or discourage anomalous sexual activity”.

Adegbola and Babatola (1999:20) further argue that changing “attitudes to sex have been adduced to the changing cultural practices of many African groups, especially as they relate to family formation and to the relaxation of the control and influence of the family”. They also went further to draw an analogy from a contemporary adage in South Western Nigeria which says thus: “*Oko kan o kun kombodu*, ‘one husband cannot satisfactorily furnish a woman’s wardrobe’, is more lenient towards female extramarital sex and permits it on the grounds of material acquisition by the woman”. There is no doubt that the family moderates Nigerians’ attitudes towards anomalous sexual behaviour. But we are tempted to add that Adegbola and Babatola’s submission does not underscore the fact that most Nigerians still cherish strong family values. Within that context, the phenomena of sexual networking and sexual liaisons are perceived by most Nigerians as aberrations of the generally held family norms and values. In both rural and urban areas in Nigeria, the socioeconomic pressures of globalisation have long been associated with anomalous sexual behaviour. But the family institution in Nigeria has continued to give adequate account of itself in the struggle to come to terms with the social, economic and material reality of a globalised world.

### **6.3 EXPATRIATE OIL WORKERS AND THE SEXUAL LIAISON INDUSTRY:**

Community leaders and gatekeepers we interacted with observe that prior to the emergence of full scale militant activities and kidnappings of oil workers, foreign expatriates had free movement in and around the Niger Delta. During this time foreign oil workers were always welcome in communities. Some of them live around the communities without problems. In the words of a community leader, “they mingled with our people and in the process admired and started sexual relations with our women. It is normal and natural for humans to be attracted to the opposite sex. There was no problem in terms of their interaction with our communities. When the Niger Delta was relatively peaceful, once sailors or oil workers come from off-shore, they stroll out to socialise in bars within local communities in search of women”.

Others opined that in those days, when oil workers went or came back from off-shore exploration activities, there was always an instant impact on the immediate take-off communities. Participants observe that it is coastal communities that house oil companies and their heavy machineries that also bear both the environmental and human consequences of the preparation to embark on off-shore exploration. Foreign oil workers run shifts. The shifts alternate between working offshore and working onshore. According to a participant, “when foreign oil workers go offshore and come back, what saddles their minds is a woman”. Another interjects, “some of them even have permanent women or girl friends, and when they come back from off-shore with hard currency, they behave like kings and these local women sort of worship them because they are sure that their needs would be provided”.

Another issue identified as one of the factors that push expatriate oil workers into sexual liaisons with local women is that they do not usually come with their wives or partners. A community leader volunteered an explanation thus: “foreign oil workers are human beings. A normal human being requires sex. Sex is a basic need of life for any adult. Just like food, shelter and clothing, sex is the fourth basic need of life. They cannot keep flying back to their countries of origin anytime they need sex. The day they come across a young girl on the streets of Nigeria, they may have difficulties over the strategies to cultivate a relationship with her. At this point, they will realise they have a problem in their hands. To get around this problem they employ the assistance of local agents. Because most of these girls come from very poor and impoverished background, money is deployed and used to lure them”.

A participant went down memory lane to recall how the National Museum premises at Oron, the Eket and Ibeno white sand beaches and environs were a focal point of recreational and sexual liaison meeting points between local women and foreign oil workers in the 1970s and through the 1980s. The creation of Ibeno crude oil tank farms by Exxon-Mobil became a catalyst that attracted other foreign oil servicing companies, contract companies and vendors. This also led to a mass influx of additional expatriate workers into the region. All these led to a sharp increase in expatriate demand for sex with local women. Her narrative went further to state that, given the problem of militancy and the inability for foreign oil workers to move freely in cities, night clubs and recreational services were set up in secured onshore and offshore locations and sites.

Besides the issue of comfortable income which drives the sexual appetite of expatriate oil workers and motivates them to seek for and engage in sexual relationships with local women, there is also the additional literacy gap between them and local women. These two

factors (income disparity and literacy gap) play to the advantage of expatriate workers. Therefore, in the course of sexual liaisons, expatriate workers stand to gain because the whole process is skewed to their control. Beyond expatriate oil workers, there is also the adventure of expatriate sailors and engineers working with shipping companies that provide various forms of technical and engineering services to oil companies. Due to their mobile job schedule, expatriates in this second category are motivated to patronise local women and girls in very unique ways. A participant describes this as “sexual adventure in love boats”. ‘Love boats’ usually come ashore to pick up local women and ferry them to off-shore expatriate locations. Beyond the activities of ‘love boats’, there are also sexual liaison avenues in the coastal region of the Niger Delta through trawler fishing boats. Trawler boats usually fish in the high sea. Whenever such sailors are about to embark on a fishing expedition, they usually scout for local women to accompany them.

A participant gives an outline of the manifestation of expatriate patronage of local women in this way:

What we have experienced here in Port Harcourt is that in the past when there was relative peace in the Niger Delta, foreign oil workers had good relationships with our local women. Some of them set up recreational centres, eatery homes, and restaurants, drinking joints, public beer parlours/clubs and even built flats for their Nigerian girl friends. Such recreational ‘joints’ were convenient avenues for foreign oil workers to relax and refresh, as well as interact with our girls and women. These ‘joints’ were also accessible to Nigerian elites and the general public. This was the time our region was neither at war nor at peace.

Another social circumstance that motivates expatriate oil workers into sexual liaisons with local women is the potential to be involved with multiple sexual partners. This category of expatriates takes advantage of the poverty and desperation of local women and exploits them to the maximum. The problem is not just that expatriate oil workers keep multiple sexual partners, but that when pregnancy occurs, it becomes very difficult to know exactly the biological father of the child. This is part of the confusion surrounding the problem of bi-racial ‘fatherless’ children in the Niger Delta. The DNA technology is still rudimentary in both urban and rural Nigeria. Where it exists, these women are too poor to patronise it. Where the DNA service is available, it is always difficult to obtain the DNA of expatriate male partners. All these factors build into resentment for expatriate oil workers in the Niger Delta. As we shall see in chapters eight and nine of this study, the decision to embark on sexual liaisons may be largely that of the individual local Niger Delta woman or girl, but the

impact goes beyond that of her individual decision. The full strength of the impact is shouldered by the entire Niger Delta economy and society.

One other motivation comes from the desire and preference by foreign oil workers for adolescents and secondary school girls (see figure 7.3). A participant explains that adolescents and secondary school girls are aware that expatriate oil workers prefer them to older women. According to this participant, this awareness is partly responsible for why more adolescents and school girls are abandoning schools and migrating to 'oil cities' to hustle for foreign oil workers. She also pointed out that she knows some school girls who are involved in hustling for expatriate oil workers and are also attending school. How they are able to combine the two is what needs to be investigated by another study. Given that the operational logic of sexual liaisons with oil expatriate workers is time consuming, it would seem difficult to imagine that these girls are still able to create time for school. Another question is whether the school performance of such individual girls is good.

From interviews and life story accounts, other participants also gave insights on strategies adopted by expatriate workers to lure women and school girls into their sexual liaison nest. Otherwise known as 'social and economic baits', one of the strategies is to organise tours for expatriate oil workers in and around the region. This strategy was adopted when there was relative peace in the Niger Delta. With the advent of militancy in the region, a participant explained that her mandate now is usually to organise local girls and ferry them to designated areas. According to her, through such tours, "I realise that our young girls, and including even older women, are very vulnerable to foreign oil workers because these men have hard currency". She points to the fact that rather than go for Nigerian men, local women and girls prefer foreign oil workers.

This single factor is also responsible for why this participant says: "foreign oil workers use local girls and women as pleasurable items". When asked to explain why expatriate oil workers prefer adolescents and school girls, the participant responded thus:

I don't know. I am not in position to tell you what exactly is responsible for why foreign oil workers prefer young school girls. You may need to interview some of them. But I have to warn you that given the present tense situation in Port Harcourt, no expatriate oil worker will volunteer to speak out on this issue.

It is also important to stress that among expatriate oil workers, there are those who are very generous, humane and caring. A participant elaborates: "such expatriates treat our local women kindly as well as solve their financial problems and material needs. It is this category



of expatriates that sometimes ends up marrying our local women and girls. Do you know that our local girls, who are students from the University of Port Harcourt and other Nigerian Universities, solely fund their education? Coming from impoverished backgrounds, without scholarships and in this era of privatisation of our educational system, these young women have no alternative but to hustle for expatriates”.

From the foregoing forms and manifestations of sexual liaisons, we can infer that the link between the oil economy and sexual liaison is perhaps more direct than we had imagined. The fact that the general insecurity in the Niger Delta has forced expatriate oil workers and sailors to express their motivation for sexual relationship with local women through what research participants refer to as ‘love flats’, ‘love boat adventures’, ‘recreational trawling’ and ‘tugboat parties’ speaks volumes about what is unfolding in the Niger Delta. These secluded sites, secured and barricaded onshore expatriate residential quarters, houses, night clubs, bars and love flats, and offshore adventures, are yet to attract the attention of the Nigerian state. Rather, security at these secluded sites is usually provided for by Nigerian state security services. The advent of cell phone and internet technology, and the use of helicopters, fishing trawlers and tugboats ensure the smooth mobilisation and conveyance of local women to and from onshore or offshore locations and sites.

In an attempt to find out if local women are in some cases coerced into embarking on ‘love boat expeditions’ or “recreational love adventures’ with expatriate oil workers and sailors; a key informant who lives and works in and round Onne oil and gas export free zone, notes that, in the peaceful past, sailors didn’t go out with local girls in an indiscriminatory fashion. What happened was that, when sailors came ashore at the water front, they met their Nigerian contacts who arranged and provided the necessary connection with carefully selected local women. At that time, the issue was not so much about material benefit but more about relationships. Therefore anytime sailors wanted to embark on any expedition, arrangements were made with their agents to supply them with the number of local women required. Such women were said to be very lucky as their fortunes could turn around. The marital aspects of sexual relationship were of uppermost importance to the women, rather than the secondary material benefits that would accrue while the liaison lasted. We probed further to ascertain how the organisation or network that recruits local women for expatriate workers and sailors operates. Participants’ responses to this question can be summed up in two ways.

First of all, those regular sailors that come ashore in the Niger Delta have their contact agents. Before they come ashore, arrangements to recruit local women are usually made by

their agents. Local women with permanent boyfriends among these foreign sailors and oil workers usually go to the water front to welcome their arrival either from a shipping expedition or back from offshore duties. Secondly, there are those who may be arriving in Nigeria for the first time. This group of sailors do not have agents and no pre-arrangements. For those who do have agents, the water front is used as an immediate and convenient point of contact. Yet, there are a good number of expatriates who prefer to 'play around' rather than have steady or permanent girlfriends. A participant painted the picture thus:

When there was peace in the Niger Delta, the coastal areas in the oil producing zones of the Niger Delta were just like when you see swimmers flirt around in water or swimming pools. This scenario is similar to what used to be obtainable at water front areas around Port Harcourt, Onne, Ibeno and Eket and Oron. When sailors or oil workers come ashore within the water fronts, local women and girls flock around. Some expose themselves as a way to seek attention and possible patronage by sailors or oil workers.

An important finding that also explains the penchant or motivation of expatriate oil workers for sexual relationships with local women in the Niger Delta has to do with the protection they enjoy from the Nigerian state. Participants took their turn to debate on this subject. The outcome of their intense debate can be summarised as follows: that the agreement to bring oil companies into the Niger Delta was signed, sealed and delivered between the Federal Government and oil companies. Oil bearing communities played no part in it. Participants also made several references to the Nigerian land use act which states that all land belongs to the Nigerian state and not to indigenous people who live and work on the land. So it will be impossible for host communities to have any form of control over the negative sexual activities of expatriate oil workers.

In legal terms, sexual liaison activities in these sites and locations are presumed to take place outside the view of Nigerian law enforcement agencies. But our study found that it is indeed the Nigerian state security agencies that provide round the clock protection at these sexual liaison sites and locations. The research team sought and obtained audience with the Nigerian immigration office. During our interaction with the immigration officers, we were only allowed to take hand written notes.

The position of the immigration department did not differ with what participants had told the researcher about the determination by the Nigerian state to protect oil companies and their workers at all costs. Immigration officers spoke under absolute condition of anonymity. They made it abundantly clear that the Nigerian federal government wants investors in the oil

sector and will do everything to encourage them to come and stay. The security of expatriate workers is therefore central to the policy of wooing foreign investors. Part of that security is the insurance that the life of oil workers is protected. In that case, if a foreign worker violates a local woman in any form, such worker is protected. The unfortunate dimension of the problem is that the personal identity details or information on foreign workers is neither available to their local Nigerian girlfriends nor the local host communities. It is therefore difficult and futile to attempt to trace the identity of a foreign oil worker who has violated a local woman. Similarly, it is equally extremely difficult for a 'fatherless' child to trace an expatriate biological father or press charges for child support.

An officer from the Nigerian Immigration Department volunteered: "it is our duty to ensure the safety of expatriate oil workers because we want to encourage foreign investment in the Nigerian economy". The paradox is that the presence of state security services around onshore and offshore expatriate abodes and sexual liaison sites does not provide any form of security to local women. Local women are therefore prone to all forms of abuse by their expatriate partners without respite. Women involved in sexual liaisons were unanimous on the fact that women who find themselves onshore and offshore expatriate abodes or sexual liaison sites were the lucky ones. According to a participant; "it is usually very difficult for us to establish links with expatriate male oil workers without going through some form of agent".

In their drive to cultivate and sustain links to oil enclave locations and expatriate abodes, there is always intense competition among local women and girls. Consequently, agents tap into this competition to exploit these poor women. Competition among local women and girls do degenerate into violence and in some cases death. This is the way a participant describes it:

With the ongoing insecurity in the Niger Delta, it is always difficult to establish a relationship with foreign oil workers without going through some Madams/*Ogas* (sexual liaison entrepreneurs). This is a practice within the domain of very rich and invisible women/men elite who reside around oil cities in the Niger Delta. These elite women/men live in expensive apartments. They operate behind strictly hidden identities. They are responsible for ferrying young girls and women to foreign oil workers.

Oil companies may have their big offices in Port Harcourt or Lagos, but given the problem of kidnapping of expatriate workers, it became extremely difficult for them to engage in recreational activities in the big oil cities. This marked the beginning of relocating

recreational activities offshore and outside the big oil cities. Participants note that local women ferried offshore for recreational activities with expatriates could stay for as long as a year or more before they came back onshore. A participant confessed: “what goes on in some of these onshore/offshore expatriate abodes can only be imagined”. When probed to explain the meaning of “can only be imagined”, this participant did not respond, but stated that these local women are expected to be discreet about what they do at expatriate quarters. According her, “the greatest indiscretion would be for me to put it into words”.

An important revelation in the foregoing narrative is that in some cases, before embarking on an expedition of sexual liaison, local women and girls are usually given some kind of orientation on behavioural attitudes that would help to entice their prospective expatriate partners. As explained by a participant: “we prepare them psychologically before embarking on such trips because, while some may succeed and even get husbands, others may not be very lucky; some of these women and girls go offshore and never come back”.

Our key informants also confirm that these elite women/men seem to have some form of informal access to major oil companies as well as oil servicing companies. They are also connected to local groups in the Niger Delta region such as politicians in government and elements in the state security forces. These sexual liaison entrepreneurs operate with what can be regarded as an unwritten constitution. They are not just invisible, but occupy the top echelon, supervise and relatively control this illusive sexual liaison ‘industry’. Sexual liaison in the Niger Delta cannot be regarded as prostitution because there is no transaction involved. The vantage position of sexual liaison entrepreneurs, however, places them in a strategic position to seek out expatriates in search of fun or Nigerian wives, and the leverage to recruit and supply local women and girls to take care of the sexual desires of such expatriates.

Adolescent girls who often migrate from rural villages to oil enclaves in search for ‘better life’ are the most vulnerable to these entrepreneurs because they live either with distant relatives, friends, or by themselves. We also found that sexual liaison entrepreneurs recruit women and girls from university campuses and other tertiary institutions within and outside the Niger Delta. Given the paradox of oil boom and massive primitive accumulation alongside raging poverty and economic doom for the majority of the indigenous population, the absence of alternative economic opportunities for indigenous women and girls in the Niger Delta translates to mean that sexual liaison entrepreneurs feed on human misery and suffering. From the outcome of our FGDs and IDIs, it can be inferred that sexual liaison entrepreneurs are parasitic elements who serve as conduits through which severely deprived

women and girls are sexually exploited. During an IDI session, a participant collaborates with her experience thus:

I abandoned my university education because the '*Oga-Madam*' told me that this white man will marry me. I lived with him for two years. We had two children. See my children: they are 'white'. They cannot go to school because I have no money. Their father is no longer in Nigeria. I cannot go back to my parents because my father is very angry with me. My life is ruined.

There are other forms of social risks associated with sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. We found that local women and girls are confronted with varying manifestations of personal risk and danger depending on the character and temperament of the expatriate male partner they are dealing with. This situation is due largely to the fact that these women and girls do not have an iota of legal protection or personal control over potential and actual consequences that await them. Beside the health related risk, participants at FGDs, IDIs and life histories, were in agreement that there are occasional violent incidents especially at expatriate offshore abodes or locations.

The second level of risk occurs in onshore environments or sites such as secluded expatriate oil workers' quarters, love flats and secluded night clubs. Given that the practice of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta is not conducted in the same way as conventional prostitution, and that it takes place in mostly an invisible/illegal way with no legal protection for local women and girls, it is officially considered illegal by the Nigerian state. This makes it extremely difficult for local women and girls to either prosecute or seek redress from expatriates who have abused them. The conclusions we can draw from information obtained from interview sessions with representatives of the Nigerian Immigration Department, is that foreign oil workers are accorded unwritten legal protection by the Nigerian state and state security services.

Given the foregoing narratives, violence and other forms of sexual abuse suffered by local women and girls are personalised and do not usually attract the attention of the state or the Nigerian public. They also have not attracted adequate scholarly consideration by the intellectual world. Some participants drew our attention to the fact that beside the health implication, the loss of self esteem, and personal risk, there are the emotional consequences for women who are abandoned and left with bi-racial 'fatherless' children. Some women victims live with the memories throughout their lives. A participant put it this way:

Our business is as dangerous as a sharp and double edged sword. If you are lucky to meet a man that is good and 'God fearing', he will give you money, support your family and even marry you. If you are not lucky, you can lose your life and leave your parents with pains. I know of a lady that lost her life in those oil expatriate quarters.

Some women were however quick to add that the potential benefits they derive tend to outweigh the risks. A contrary view to the foregoing gloomy narratives therefore indicates that some local women indeed have romantic sexual relationships with expatriate oil workers. Some of these local women married; others received monetary and material rewards. In some other cases the FGDs and IDIs indicate that some of these women influenced their expatriate sexual partners to provide basic community development facilities and social amenities like potable drinking water and provision of school equipment. It is on the basis of the foregoing that some women and girls tended to rationalise the practice of sexual liaison in the Niger Delta.

There is no doubt that there are financial benefits that these women derived. But some of our research participants also argue that there have been reports of circumstances in which expatriate oil workers have been very cruel to local women. In the course of offshore sexual expeditions on the high sea, some of these women are said to also always come back with all kinds of sicknesses. Depending on how long they stay offshore or on the high sea, some do experience home sickness. Several factors can lead to home sickness. The strange food they eat on the high sea, changes in weather and environment tend to affect the health of these women. The problem is that they embark on these expeditions healthy and hearty, but come back with all kinds of ill health. In some cases, some of them tend to exhibit psychological problems as their behaviour becomes abnormal. Some try to adjust, but adjustment is always difficult because their minds keep flipping back to their experiences offshore. Unfortunately, they would not want to share their problems with anybody or seek help from professional medical experts. Due to long-term cumulative and often severe sexual abuse suffered by some of these women, they endure severe internal pressures and develop a tendency to keep away from family relations and the general society, behave in an episodic manner, become self isolated and are severely amnesic.

A related and corroborative study, *Repressed memory or dissociative amnesia* by Schefflin and Brown (1996:145–146), says that the condition of such women can best be described as "general retrograde amnesia", a kind of memory that "is not likely to be forgotten". In short, retrograde amnesia has taken over the lives of some of the local women

involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers in the Niger Delta. Generally women who are victims of sexual exploitation or abuse are more likely to experience time loss and flashbacks and to report the recovered memory of abuse, initially in the form of “unbidden images” devoid of emotions and of self-reference (this is not happening to me). Such women have the tendency to dissociation, hallucinations, self-injury and suicide tendencies, which are all symptoms of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons or sexual exploitation. Some participants volunteered that there are occasions when they hardly gave any thought to their history of sexual exploitation by expatriate oil workers. Some said that there are occasions when they had completely forgotten. Others said that they don't always think about it, yet they have not completely forgotten about it either.

We tried to find out whether Nigerian oil workers are also involved in sexual liaisons with local women. Participants observe that this is a generic practice that is common with the operations of the oil industry in Nigeria. The attitude and behaviour of oil workers in the Niger Delta is said to be almost the same. Given the nature of the oil industry whose major extractive activities are far removed, isolated from normal life, enjoined with operations that run almost 24 hours, workers are kept busy all the time. Secondly, due to the mobile nature of their work, most oil workers whether expatriate or Nigerians do not always move with their families. Whenever such workers are off duty, they go to relax the stress of work at recreational centres and in the process meet local women. The fundamental difference between expatriates and Nigerians is that the identities of Nigerian men are known and traceable.

Whether expatriate or Nigerians, our finding is that the attitude of oil workers towards women in the Niger Delta is almost the same. A participant interjects: “Do not also forget the reasons behind why local Nigerian women feast and hover around oil workers (expatriates or Nigerians) like bees hover around a beehive. This is because these women know that those who work in the oil sector of the Nigerian economy are paid better than workers from other sectors. Within the oil sector, expatriates earn even more because they are paid in hard currency. This single factor makes foreign oil workers more attractive to local women. It is in the absence of or non-availability of expatriate oil workers that a local woman will go for a Nigerian oil worker”. From the foregoing, and as we have stated elsewhere, the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta is largely a function of income disparity.

Due to current incessant violence and kidnapping of foreigners in the Niger Delta, it was generally the opinion of participants that expatriate oil workers' motivation and penchant for sexual liaisons with local women in the Niger Delta is waning. Consequently, local

women's accessibility to expatriate oil workers has become extremely difficult. In the words of a participant, "foreign oil workers have become a very scarce commodity, invisible and difficult to come by". Hustling for expatriates by local women has equally become a very difficult endeavour. After a long period of hustling without success, some of these girls and women are said to be forced by circumstances to 'look inward for survival'. 'Looking inward' includes engaging in petty trading, running make-shift beer parlours, restaurants, hair dressing saloons, or becoming sale girls in petrol stations, and other odd jobs or informal trading activities. Yet, others venture out every evening for 'domestic hustling' otherwise known as female prostitution and hawking around streets, clubs, and hotels for local Nigerian men.

#### **6.4 OIL COMPANIES AND THE RELIGIOUS-PURITAN NARRATIVE ON SEXUAL LIAISONS:**

Although we merely stumbled on the church renovation, the discovery turned out to be a very significant to our field research findings. First of all, it provided us with a platform to interact with the church on our research questions. It is important to say that, right from the research proposal, we made it absolutely clear that this research was not guided by any form of moral judgment on the issue of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. But after stumbling on Exxon-Mobil church renovation activities, we spread our search light. We discovered that church renovation exercises were either ongoing or have been completed in Qua Iboe Church branches in Ibeno, Eket and elsewhere. At this juncture, the main researcher consulted with the research team and decided that it would be of sociological importance to interact with the church leadership to probe and unearth their narrative and understanding of the significance of Exxon-Mobil's renovations and reconstruction of Qua Iboe Church branches.

The foregoing is an important ethnographic discovery which we had downplayed at the beginning or proposal writing stage of this study. But it turns out that it occupies a centre and strong presence in the debate over the place of morality and religion in the phenomenon of sexual liaisons. We also discovered that religion is fast gaining centre stage, to the extent that there is a considerable attempt to sweep the material basis for sexual liaison under the carpet. We found that the religious or moral/puritan narrative is strongly spearheaded and sponsored by oil TNCs. The objective seems to be a drive to shift the focus of the challenges posed by sexual liaisons away from the activities of TNCs. Exxon-Mobil therefore went beyond rhetoric and began renovation and reconstruction of churches and church related structures.



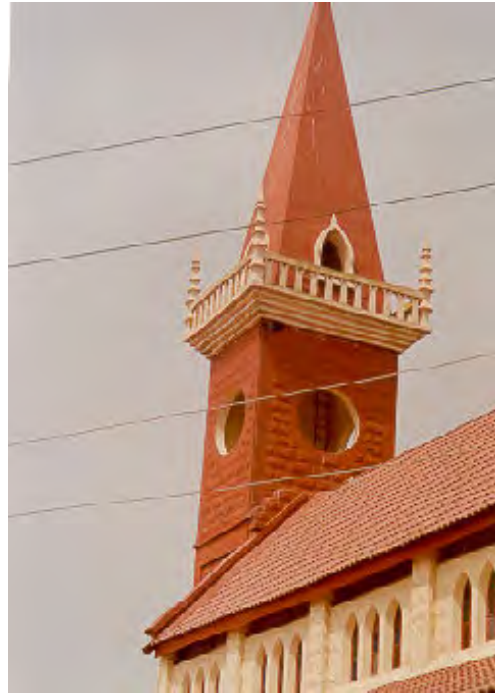
Plates 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 speak volumes on this subject matter. It is important to observe that the Mobil Project bill board in figure 6.4 boldly indicates that “Mobil Care”.



**Plate 6.4** Mobil's Qua Iboe Church and Tower Renovation Project bill board at Upenekang  
Source: Field Work 2008



**Plate 6.5** Mobil's Qua Iboe Church and Tower Renovation Project bill board at Upenekang-Ebeno, Ebeno Local Government Area (LGA)  
Source: Field work, February 2008



**Plate 6.6** Front and rear views of renovated Qua Iboe Church and Tower at Upenekang-Ibeno by Exxon-Mobil, Ibeno LGA

Source: Field work, February 2008



**Plate 6.7** Bill Board and Exxon-Mobil's ongoing renovation activities of Qua Iboe Church and Tower at Mkpanak - Ibenol, Ibeno LGA

Source: Field work, February 2008

Some interviewed church elders also perceived the problem from a purely religious and moralistic perspective. They blamed local women and girls for engaging in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil company workers. Some of these church elders went as far as calling these women social perverts who are responsible for perverting cultural, moral and family traditions and values. A solution to this problem according to these elders is for these women to repent, get closer to God and come back from their bad ways. Their narrative also holds that oil companies are already repenting by building new churches and renovating old ones.

A participant pointed out that “the renovation of churches by Exxon-Mobil is a practical testimony that oil companies have acknowledged guilt and are cleansing their sins”. This participant continued: “women who engage in *ashawo* activities (sexual liaisons) need to come to church so that they too can be cleansed”.

The response we got from women and school girls engaged in sexual liaisons contradicts the church elders' narrative. These women and girls argue that they went into sexual liaisons not because they enjoy it. They also argue that their relationship with expatriate oil workers cannot be regarded as prostitution but normal sexual relationships that exist between men and women, because it is not transactional or does not involve direct exchange of sex for money. They however agreed that they sometimes receive monetary and material gifts from their expatriate sexual partners. A participant averred thus: “gift giving is normal in any sexual relationship between men and women and our case cannot be any different”. Another participant states: “we needed some economic support from our expatriate partners, and I cannot classify our sexual relationship as prostitution”. She states further that “some of my friends who entered into sexual relationships with these oil workers have successfully been married as wives by their partners”. She then queried: “How can you describe us as prostitutes? Is it because we have not been able to come across foreign oil workers that will marry us?” She concludes: “even between husband and wife, there is gift giving”.

Some of these women and school girls feel that they have not broken any moral or religious values. They cited occasions in which sexual relations between Nigerian women and Nigerian men do also lead to having children out of wedlock. Yet, those women and their ‘fatherless’ children are not treated with the level of disdain and rejection shown to women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. They therefore argue that problems generated by failed sexual relationships between local women and foreign oil workers cannot be regarded as something unique or new in the Niger Delta.

Yet, there is a tiny minority of women involved in sexual liaisons who buy into the religious and moralistic/puritan view instigated by both Exxon-Mobil, and advocated by some church elders and community leaders. At the time of our field work, we found that some of the women in this category have since ‘repented’ and are active church members. They blamed the devil for tempting them to engage in sexual liaisons with foreign oil workers in the first place. This group were solidly supported Exxon-Mobil's church renovation exercises carried out in Ibeno and surrounding local governments.

Some community leaders also view sexual liaisons and the problems it generates in the Niger Delta from a largely moral dimension. One of the community leaders stigmatised women who engage in sexual liaison with expatriate oil company workers in this way: “women and girls who do *ashawo* with foreign oil workers are social outcasts, agents of sexually transmitted diseases, violators of our culture and contaminators of our society”. Other elders echoed similar puritan sentiments. While this pattern of narrative blames local women, expatriate oil company workers who patronise these local women attract no criticism. This pattern of narrative perceives local women as irresponsible and therefore justifies why local women and not their expatriate male clients should be targeted to change their ways.

The paradox with the puritan paradigm of sexual liaison is that, while local women who are themselves victims of the oil enclave economy are blamed, expatriate oil workers who are the perpetrators are ignored and made invisible. This puritan approach which targets and blames women is a classical demonstration of the patriarchal bias of the oil economy. Such an approach is unable to put in place sustainable theories as well as practical social and economic strategies to curb and eventually eliminate the practice. By blaming women, the religious or moral view of sexual liaison is not able to interrogate the patriarchal structure of the oil industry in Nigeria. It is on this patriarchal structure that expatriate men are placed at an advantageous economic position against economically weak local women and school girls.

The puritan perspective is therefore not only a misguided approach but serves to undermine women by making them take responsibility for the emergence of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and its persistence in the Niger Delta. Such an approach also blames the emotional and health risks associated with sexual liaisons on the victims. Our inability to interrogate expatriate male oil company workers who patronise these women and girls is a major limitation of this study. Like HIV/AIDS awareness programs, most outreach programs and messages against sexual liaison do not always target the role played by the male gender. Men are indeed the perpetrators of the practice, but they are veiled from blame by the puritan tools of analysis. The puritan view is propagated by some privileged citizens, and by religious, overzealous and reactionary community leaders and elements.

This stereotypical narrative is flawed on several grounds. In the first instance, local Niger Delta women and girls who engage in sexual liaisons are not from the same socioeconomic background. Secondly, we are not aware of any comprehensive empirical study or survey that has been conducted to ascertain the level of safe sex practices among

other Nigerian women and men including religious and community leaders, who do not engage in sexual liaisons with expatriate workers.

## **6.5 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter tries to capture participants' narrative and understanding of the intricacies of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and how it intersects with the oil enclave economy in the Niger Delta. The chapter interrogates the socioeconomic factors that are responsible for sexual liaisons and provides a detail profile of women and girls involved in the practice. The chapter also analyses participants' narrative on the social and economic factors that motivate expatriate oil workers to engage in the practice. The religious and moral/puritan narrative on the phenomenon, which is spearheaded by Exxon-Mobil, has also been presented and critically discussed. This chapter demonstrates that the reason for the study of women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers is not to perceive them as deviant groups or social misfits in society. Rather, these women should be seen as dialectical byproducts of the social effects of globalised patriarchy occasioned by the exploitative activities of transnational oil TNCs which dispossess the indigenous population of the Niger Delta in general, and women in particular.

The chapter holds that no amount of moral or puritan explanations can replace the fundamental fact that the material alienation of indigenous women in the Niger Delta by oil extractive activities is largely responsible for their social and economic dislocations. Caldwell (1995:168) has earlier corroborated in her study that increasing monetisation, globalisation and enclivity of developing economies creates a material condition "where both goods and sex could be more easily bought" and sold. In the process of the field work, we discovered that most women involved in sexual liaisons wanted better sources of occupation or sources of income generation. Most of the women who participated in our interviews and life experience sharing were pleased to have been part of this study and hoped that a solution could be found for the interest of future generations of women in the Niger Delta.

This chapter demonstrates that the unique enclivity of the Niger Delta oil economy, and not religion, is the determinant of peoples' attitude, behaviour and living conditions in the Niger Delta. The presence of oil companies in the Niger Delta contributes to the rising inflationary rate that is far above other regions in the country. Given the effects of the runaway inflation, average parents in the Niger Delta are not always able to provide all the necessary needs to their wards, most especially the girls. These girls are therefore forced by the reality of the situation to search for an alternative way to augment the efforts of their

parents by engaging in sexual relationships with expatriate oil workers, sailors or any other expatriate found around.

## **CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL IMPACT OF SEXUAL LIAISONS ON NIGER DELTA WOMEN AND SOCIETY**

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### **7 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discuss the social consequences of sexual liaisons on women as victims and the effects on Niger Delta society in general. There are two strong narratives on the social effects of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. The first is what can be regarded as the majority view. Participants from this narrative conceive the social effects of sexual liaisons from a purely negative perspective. This is the way a participant summarised the negative effects of sexual liaisons:

I have seen school girls from Port Harcourt, Soku, Bonny, Onne, Ibeno, Eket and Oron whose lives have been shattered after expatriate oil workers used and abandoned them. Some of them are left with children they cannot cater for. Some of them were deceived with a false affluent life style by the oil workers. After being abandoned by their expatriate lovers, they are also rejected by society and life becomes very difficult and nasty. I know of some ladies who went deeper and deeper into drug use. Others committed suicide rather than face the challenges inflicted on them by their runaway expatriate lovers. If you go to 'Aker' base, or 'Gambia' you will see what I am saying. There you will see half-caste children engaged in street begging. For those who are unable to cater for their children, they give them out to foster parents. There is a particular lady who has retired from the hustling business. She lives here in Port Harcourt. She has her own half-caste children. But she also looks after other half-caste kids of her friends who are still very much into hustling for expatriate oil workers. If you go there you will see that the house is crammed, and the children are living in appalling conditions.

(Interviewee: Field work 2008)

The second narrative sees sexual liaisons from a positive perspective. Contrary to the above quoted statement, some participants drew our attention to the fact that some of the women and school girls involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate workers are lucky because they have an advantage over those who have none. We were made to understand that some expatriate oil workers can be good to the extent that they built good houses for the parents of



their lovers. A participant volunteered: “some even end up marrying our local girls and women; some of them brought development projects to local communities where there were none in the immediate past; some of these girls plough resources obtained from hustling activities to support their parents, educate and train their siblings in school”.

One other effect of sexual liaisons on women as victims is that some of them who are said to be succeeding are also more likely to continue to engage in the practice for a relatively long time. It would appear to such a woman that the material benefits come cheap because there may not be clear physical evidence of qualitative and quantitative depreciation on the women involved. This in part may explain why both young and old women who are involved in the practice persist in it until very late in their lives. At a later stage, life becomes a challenge for those who were not able to save what they made during the ‘successful’ years of their sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. Sexual liaison therefore has the tendency to be addictive because it gives poor women hope that the material benefits will continue to flow. To that extent, the hope of a ‘successful’ tomorrow stretches from a few months into years. Hence success is left to whims and caprices of hope through sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers; it limits the mental scope and ability of an individual woman, who exploits existing opportunities, to fully realise her actual potential in a positive way.

This chapter calls for a paradigm shift from the religious, puritan or moral perspective of the analysis of the ramifications of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate workers in the Niger Delta. This chapter emphasises that a women’s reproductive rights and health are more than just a matter of individual choices. Rather, they are part of a variety of factors and conditions within one's experiences, family, and community. We cannot afford to separate or place the effects of sexual liaisons on women as victims or on the general Niger Delta society in terms of a hierarchy of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, or ‘success’ and ‘failure’. This is because we cannot separate the effects of sexual liaisons from the oil enclave economic circumstances or infrastructure that produces the mental, social and environmental superstructure of its victims. An inter-sectional paradigm shift will help us to address the economic systems of oppression that simultaneously discriminate against women in particular and OBCs in general. We observe in chapters one, two and three that the intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination against women are historically linked to the enclivity of the oil industry. This chapter also shows the extent to which women’s bodies have been immersed in the exploitative and oppressive oil industry in the Niger Delta.

The question that was generally asked of research participants was: How does sexual liaison impact on women engaged in the practice? The convergence of responses can

generically be captured in the following narrative. Some of the implications were seen by participants as direct. Others were regarded as indirect, individualised, and in some cases difficult to notice in the open. This is what can be regarded as salient and unquantifiable amnesic effects of sexual liaisons on women as victims. For instance, women or school girls who obtain material benefits from expatriate sexual partners on a sustainable basis may not notice the effects until very much later in life. As noted in chapter seven, one of the common denominators is that women involved in transactional sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers are not protected by law. If anything goes wrong with the relationship, it is the woman that bears the burden and effects.

The foregoing individual life histories and life experiences would sound like fairy tales, fiction or even fictitious stories. Their stories reflect the odds that oil-producing companies (TNCs) and the oil economy represent in the Niger Delta. These stories are therefore a microscopic reflection of the result of the intersection of the oil enclave economy and sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. It is within such a context that youth anger and oil insurgency (see chapter nine) can be understood.

An observation that can be made on the 'success' narrative of sexual liaisons is that as in other Nigerian regions, life for those on the lower rungs of the ladder in the oil enclave economy of the Niger Delta is full of intense personalised struggle. Hustling is part and parcel of the race for 'oil money'. It looks like the oil economy has opened the eyes and ears of local people beyond their normal subsistence agricultural and communal practices. The search for money looks as if it is the beginning of wisdom. There is also the phenomenon of a mass rush into 'oil cities', as if 'oil money' abounds on the street for everybody to pick up. People get into these oil enclaves only to discover that life is very expensive and survival difficult. This is the challenge. A good number of immigrants into these cities are homeless and do not have normal accommodation. They hang around the waterfronts and on the fringes of big companies.

## **7.1 SOCIAL IMPACT OF SEXUAL LIAISONS ON WOMEN AS DIRECT VICTIMS**

From our ethnographic field research with participants, two broad but contradictory narratives on the impact of sexual liaisons emerged. The first view which is akin to the puritan insinuation on sexual liaisons blames local women and girls. This view insists that the problem is personal because local women involved in the practice did not consult "our people before they began their journey of sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. The argument is that the Niger Delta people did not sanction such liaisons. That the decision was purely that

of the individual women involved. Therefore, each individual woman should be left to account for her actions. The second broad view states that those who blame “our local women for engaging in sexual liaisons with foreign oil workers do not seem to understand the magnitude of damage that oil has done to our people”. This view holds that these girls are not responsible for what is happening in the Niger Delta. Rather, responsibility is squarely on the shoulders of the Nigerian state and oil companies. Most of the responses from participants identified with the second view. It is therefore within the context of the second view that we present participants’ narrative on the social impact of sexual liaisons on women as direct victims.

A participant told a story about her friend who had relationship with an expatriate working with one of the oil servicing companies in the Niger Delta. After giving birth to a daughter both the Nigerian lady and her male partner left their daughter behind with a housemaid and travelled to Europe. They did not tell the housemaid where they were going. In the words of this participant; “they all just disappeared”. The child grew and by the time she was 17 years, she tried to find out who her parents were. Being a friend to her mother, this participant tried to explain to her the circumstances of her birth. In October 2005, she gave the young girl a telephone number which she used to contact her mother in Europe. The mother promised to come to Nigeria to see her. At the time of this interview in May 2008, however, nothing further had been heard from the mother. In an interview with the young girl, she expressed sadness that she could not see her parents. Her concern was that she did not even know which ethnic group her mother comes from. She has no surname. She is only known by a single name. She dropped-out of school. But one thing that is of great concern is that this very girl is also following her mother’s footsteps. She is involved in a sexual relationship with a foreign oil worker in Port Harcourt. She opined: “He pays my rent, gives me a feeding allowance and bought a car for me”. After visiting this 17 year old girl and observing where she lives in Port Harcourt, it became very obvious that a vicious circle is about to repeated.

There is yet another story of a young woman who had four bi-racial children from four different men. The first child was with a Lebanese. When we probed to find out the where about of the child, we were told that she abandoned that child to her mother in Lagos and then moved on with her life to begin another sexual relationship with a Scotsman in 2000. Brian bought a small car for her. In the process of their sexual liaison, she had a child for him. In this particular case, Brian made arrangements for the oil servicing company he was working with to remit part of his salary into her personal account for the upkeep of the child.

But by the time she had the second child for Brian, the oil servicing company kicked against the relationship. This was because management of the oil servicing company had the details of Brian's Scottish wife and children back in Scotland.

Brian was relieved of his job by the company. After a series of negotiations, he was reinstated on condition that he desisted from relating with the lady. He finally cut off from her in 2006. The lady developed psychiatric problems and was taken to hospital. While undergoing the treatment in the hospital, she left her children alone in the house. This participant who narrated the story said that being a friend, she went and took the children. During the period of the psychiatric treatment the children could not attend school. Because her health deteriorated while in the hospital, she was taking to a healing church and she became somehow normal. Brian left Nigeria before she could complete her treatment. He did not leave any contact address for her.

When she came back from treatment, she did not change her drinking, drug addiction and night club lifestyle. She became pregnant again with the fourth child from another foreign oil worker whom she could not name. During the fourth pregnancy, she again relapsed and became mentally ill. She was no longer in position to take care of herself, her children and the pregnancy. She was taken to her parents in the village. Her own mother, also a poor and dejected single mother had just relocated from Lagos back to the village and was not in position to take care of her bi-racial grand children. The mother suggested that her pregnant daughter be taken to the hospital. At the hospital, she successfully gave birth to a baby boy, but died two months after child birth. The friend looking after her three children also had two 'fatherless' children of her own from two different expatriate oil workers. She laments:

You can see that her three 'fatherless' children are with me. I have my own two children from two different white men. With her three children, I now have five children to provide for. It is a big burden on me. I applied to the social welfare office here in Port Harcourt for assistance. I receive no financial assistance from the government. It is like both the government and the general society are punishing me for getting into relationships with these foreigners who came here at the invitation of the Nigerian government. But I must tell you that I am not alone. There are many other children out there who are born out of sexual relationship with foreigners that are not as lucky as these five children with me. At least these kids with me have a home; most others are just abandoned on the street.

The young woman volunteered and took the research team to places where we saw similarly distressed and abandoned 'fatherless' children. For the sake of anonymity, we

cannot mention the locations of some of these distressed 'fatherless' children. We made attempt to find out if these children are aware of what is happening around them. Responses were in the affirmative. A participant volunteered, "these children see and understand what is happening; they always feel depressed when people talk about the negative attitude and habits of their mothers".

For a mother, the effects of 'fatherlessness' of a child born out of a sexual liaison with a foreign oil worker are multi-dimensional. Like their 'fatherless' children, such mothers suffer social, economic and psychological trauma. Despite the cultural diversity in the Niger Delta, there is one common denominator when it comes to the issues of mother and father's responsibilities to a child. There are some responsibilities meant for the mother and there are others meant for the father of a child. What happens in the absence of the foreign father is that the single mother is shouldered with double responsibilities. The economic impact of performing these two responsibilities can be overbearing on a single mother, because such a mother is responsible for the provision of education, food, health and other welfare needs of the child. This makes the mother become restless and stressed.

At the immediate family and community level, a woman with a bi-racial 'fatherless' child is seen as an irresponsible person. Because of this stereotype or stigma, some of these women tend to abandon their children to parents, close relatives, and/or well wishers. Some others may even just abandon their children on the street. After abandoning these children some of them go to re-marry Nigerian men. According to some of participants, this is the only way to shake off the social stigma associated with having a bi-racial 'fatherless' child. A participant volunteered: "re-marrying a Nigerian husband is a way of cleansing the 'curse' on community as well as 'redeeming' your battered image in society". By securing another marriage, these women will now have children with a full family name.

What the foregoing tells us is the sociology of name-naming in Africa. In most Sub-Saharan African societies a child can only derive a surname through his/her biological father. A 'fatherless' child has no family name, just as the mother also loses out because she cannot bear her absentee's foreign husband's name. Those women who are able to remarry stand the chance to circumvent the stigma and get 'redeemed'. A new marriage with a physically present Nigerian husband enables a woman to have a name for both her expected children and for herself. But the 'fatherless' child or children she had through previous sexual liaison relationships with foreign oil workers are left out of the new equation, because they cannot bear her present husband's name. However, participants indicate that occasions have arisen where new husbands do accept these 'fatherless' children by allowing them to bear their

family names. Such occasions are however not very common. This aspect of the problem is fully discussed in the next section.

Yet, another participant describes her dilemma by stating that she has been abandoned with three children from three different men of Caucasian ancestry. She has no regular job and survival comes from the support she gets from friends and well wishers. But this support does not come regularly. There are times her children go hungry without anything to eat. With all these challenges, her children cannot go to a good school because she cannot pay the school fees. Part of her complaints is that because of the 'white' skin pigmentation of these children, they stand out as different from other children in the community. That in itself is a problem. It shows clearly that they are of a white father. People keep asking her about the whereabouts of the father of these children and she is not always able to provide answers acceptable to inquisitive members of her community. "Most of the time", she said, "I am stressed to a breaking point. I can no longer handle the inquisitiveness of our people". She added, "this is what we live with all our lives". By 'we', she means Niger Delta women who have had difficult outcomes from their involvement in sexual liaisons with foreign oil workers. Due to societal pressure, she keeps thinking and hardly sleeps. She sums up her situation thus: "It pains me. I have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (HBP). You can see that my health is failing. If I die who will take care of these children? That is my concern now. Look at where we are living. This is a shack in a big 'oil city'". She sums up how the past continues to haunt her life by stating that, "I feel very bad and wish I could lay my hands on those men. If I can find one of them, I will sniff life out of that person". She also states that she is the only child of a single mother, with no father, brother or sister to turn to for support.

Narrating a similar bitter experience with a foreign oil worker, a participant drew our attention to the fact that society often tagged them as '*ashawo*' or prostitutes. She said: "health wise, some of us are also exposed to so many risks, the first risk is that there is no any form of security for us because these foreign men do not care, but also because we are desperate for their love and attention, some of them treat us as if we are not human beings". She continued: "I know of a girl who lost her life because of what a white man did to her here in Port Harcourt". She also volunteered thus: "for some of us, our womanhood, our respect, dignity and identity is taken away". She adds: "a few of us may be lucky to get good men and marry, but majority of us are left with nothing but pains, and that is why some of us become drug addicts or commit suicide".

We observe that some of the women are prone to drug addiction, smoking, alcoholism and clubbing, risky abortion practices and other dangerous lifestyles. Some of our interviewees alleged that some of the foreign oil workers and sailors also abuse drugs. On abortion, a participant acknowledged that many of her friends have committed abortion rather than have 'fatherless' children. While some are forced to undertake abortion by their foreign partners, some undergo the abortion process without even the knowledge of their foreign partners. Some of them died in the process. In her own case, she had two separate abortions without the knowledge of her two different foreign partners. In her words: "I am lucky to be alive today. What we are doing is a game of chance and not prostitution. Now most of us are on pregnancy prevention pills. We gamble with our lives and bodies with the hope that these sexual relationships will yield fruits like marriage and the opportunity to be taken abroad. You cannot call that prostitution. But yet, our communities and the general society tag us as *ashawo*" (prostitute). The possibility for sudden death is a signature that hangs on women and girls involved in sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta.

Our attention was also drawn to the fact that some foreign oil workers do abscond with the children without the knowledge of their Nigerian mothers. So the problem is not just one way, but two-way. An interviewee told the research team, "I lost my two children to the father and I am yet to recover from the trauma of thinking about them". There are occasions when women like this interviewee are so traumatised by the situation that they get absent minded, angry and agitated and in some cases relapse into thinking about past encounters with their expatriate sexual partners. Yuan (et al.: 2006:1) describes this situation as "severe symptoms or long-term distress". There were occasions that the research team had to suspend or stop interview sessions because some participants got too emotional and continued to cry profusely. With support from the representative of NDDC in the research team and key informants from civil society organisations, such participants were provided with professional counselling on trauma management.

Another aspect of the impact of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons has to do with those women that have been in the practice and are said to have been 'successful'. Participants' debate over what constitute 'success' in sexual liaisons was a contested issue throughout our field work interviews. But the opinions expressed by participants can be grouped into three broad categories. The first category includes those participants who conceive 'success' to simply mean those women and school girls who married their expatriate partners. These 'successful' women and girls are iconic symbols, a point of reference as well as push factor to their peers. New entrants are therefore attracted to the trail of sexual liaisons with foreign

oil workers and sailors, because they hope to 'succeed' too. Despite the negative connotation accorded sexual liaisons, the struggle for 'success' continues to attract more and more women and school girls into the trail.

A lady of about 45 years or more, confessed that even at her advanced age, she still hoped to cultivate a 'successful' relationship that would eventually end in marriage with an expatriate oil worker. Like this woman, many other participants as old as 45 or 50 years opined that they are still dreaming and hoping too. These women are not conscious of time and may not be aware that time is not on their side. Some of them confessed to being in the 'hustling' business for ten years or more, yet they have not been 'successful' at getting an expatriate husband.

A participant, who was on vacation at the time of our field research in 2008, gave us a rundown of her success life history. Her husband is Spanish. They met at a night club when he was with an oil servicing company. They had a flourishing relationship for about three years and got married the fourth year. They lived together for many years in Port Harcourt and had four children. But due to the militant activities and insecurity in Port Harcourt, they have all relocated to Spain with their children. She said that her husband contributed in building bore holes, schools, clinics and constructed roads for her village. He was also said to have placed some unemployed youths from her village into the employ of some oil companies. For those youths who could not be employed, he helped kick-start small scale businesses for them. In conclusion, he is said to have contributed positively to the development of his wife's community. This man is said to have changed the fortune of not only his wife's relations, but the entire community. Participants described him as a 'good' foreign oil worker.

Supporting this 'success' story, a participant complained; "hence the Nigerian government could not do anything for us, this good gentleman from Spain has developed our community". Another added; "you can see that there is no youth unrest and militant activities in our village; it is due to what this man has done for us". This story is considered by participants to be positive because a casual sexual relationship that began in a night club later blossomed into full scale marriage. While this sentiment is understandable, the circumstances that contributed to the 'success' in this particular story may not be replicated elsewhere. Each case has its own reality and circumstance.

Participants who subscribe to the second broad category of what constitutes 'successful' in a sexual liaison, claimed to be neutral. Participants in this category cut across gender, demographic classifications and social class orientation. Their neutrality is informed



by the fact that there are different ways through which success can be realised in sexual liaisons. This category of participant therefore insists that marriage should not be placed as the pinnacle of success. From our observation there are no fundamental differences between participants who subscribe to the second broad concept of a 'successful' sexual liaison' and the first. Claims of relatively neutrality by participants in the second category do not seem to hold water because most of them also tended to blame those women who came out of sexual relationships with expatriates and still remain poor or abandoned with 'fatherless' children. They however showered praises and celebrated those women and girls who derived material benefits from their expatriate sexual partners.

The second category also argues that given the general poverty in the region, anyway and anyhow, if these women are able to extract or accumulate wealth and other material resources through casual sexual liaisons, it is itself success. One of the paradoxical omissions by this category of participants is that they ignored the fact that women who transcend mere sexual liaisons and material benefits and got married to expatriate oil workers are more likely to garner more material benefits and in a relatively sustainable basis. This has been demonstrated by the foregoing celebrated 'successful' story of the woman married to the Spaniard. What we can deduce from the foregoing is that both the first and second category of participants defined a 'successful' sexual liaison in relatively the same way. To both groups, 'success' means women who either got married to their expatriate male partner, or were able to accumulate wealth while the sexual relationship lasted. Claims of neutrality by the second category cannot stand. This is because both positions are materialistically driven and not fundamentally different.

The third category of research participant (particularly community and religious leaders) tended to differ fundamentally. As highlighted in chapter six, in their definition of sexual liaison success, this category of research participant perceives the phenomenon of sexual liaisons as a social, economic, cultural, psychological and religious 'evil' that continues to plague their societies and communities in the Niger Delta. The argument by this category of participant is that, notwithstanding the material benefits derived by Niger Delta women and girls from sexual liaisons with foreign oil workers, such benefits cannot undo the volume of negatives on the region. A summation of narratives from the third category argues that despite few cases of success stories, the phenomenon of sexual liaisons has more negatives than positives when placed vis-à-vis the problem of 'fatherless' children, children rejected by society, and young women driven to insanity and psychological trauma because they cannot account for the fathers of their children. This category of participants claimed

that given that the phenomenon of sexual liaisons contributes in fuelling family instability and many other associated social problems, its negatives outweigh any isolated single incident of a success story.

Yet, there was a participant who took time to spell out what she considered as the advantages and disadvantages of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. According to her, advantages include: “get money and re-invest the money on your siblings’ educational training, provide for your parents and children”. Another advantage is that it has empowered a couple of women to set up entrepreneurial businesses in the fast food industry. Fast food restaurants in the Port Harcourt are run by women with the financial support from their boyfriends who are more likely to be expatriate oil workers. Again, another participant felt strongly thus:

...these foreign oil workers are ticklish and can be nasty. We must draw a line between a few of them that are good and responsible from those who are hawkish and insincere, who use and dump our local women. Majority of expatriate oil workers are heartless and always hurt the feelings of our local women. I have lived all my life in Port Harcourt and have worked with NGOs and Church organisations whose activities have been on alleviating problems faced by women abandoned by expatriate oil workers with children. I can tell you that about 90 percent of our women involved in transactional sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers come out worst. Only about 10 percent of them come out better and improve their economic condition.

There were also allegations by participants in the third category that some women and girls employ fetish strategies in order to secure the love of foreign oil workers. It was alleged that some of them consult traditional medicine men and women to help them with charms and diabolical powers to help them pin down their foreign partners and ensure that they do not impregnate them and abandon them with ‘fatherless’ children. Such fetish approaches were said to have worked for some of the ‘successful’ cases. Participants cited instances but we could not verify their claims. Another participant claimed thus:

About 90 percent of our local women have suffered maltreatment in the hands of expatriate oil workers. This explains why so many of them now consult the services of native (witch) doctors. The native doctors perform rituals and prepare some concoctions which are then used by local women to hook, hypnotise, conjure, remote control, and seduce expatriate lovers. The final intended objective is to induce expatriate lovers to carry out the wishes and interests of local women.

Our conclusion is that these are unscientific and unsubstantiated claims.

## **7.2 SOCIAL EFFECTS OF SEXUAL LIAISONS ON NIGER DELTA SOCIETY**

This section presents participants' narrative on the social effects of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons on the Niger Delta society. Participants were asked to give an outline of the different ways in which the phenomenon of sexual liaisons impacts on the society and community in the Niger Delta. Participants' responses vary. Instances exist where some participants took the researcher out of the main thrust of this study to explain how the ramifications of the oil industry affect the Niger Delta. The descriptive analysis here presented did not capture any narrative that falls outside the domain of this study.

One of the common manifestations of the effects of sexual liaisons often mentioned by participants is the persistent tendency for adolescents and school girls dropping out of school to take to the act of 'scouting' for foreign expatriates. As discussed elsewhere, the colonial educational system laid the foundation for the omission of women in educational administration, planning and training. The colonial legacy is still in existence in all states of the Nigerian federation. In contemporary Nigeria, several social and economic hurdles explain why girl children continue to drop out of school. These include what Udom describes as "financial predicaments, discrimination against the education of the girl child and forced marriage"<sup>68</sup>. Udom corroborates the position of our participants by stating that education has a "great role to play in transforming the future prospects of the girl child in this our contemporary society" and that "anything short of this would spell doom for the much anticipated transformation of the fabric of the state in the interest of our future generation"<sup>69</sup>. Udom then recommends that "since education is the most vibrant weapon towards total liberation, government must pay more than a lip service to the serious issues of educating the girl child"<sup>70</sup>.

In the case of the Niger Delta, in addition to the general situation in the country, participants were unanimous that sexual liaisons contribute significantly to the phenomenon of young women and school girls dropping out of school. Participants lamented this unhealthy situation because of its potential danger for human development in the Niger Delta. Not only that the personal future of these young women and girls is ruined, but society and humanity in the Niger Delta have continued to lose young talented women to the sexual

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<sup>68</sup>. See: "369,000 girls drop out of school over forced marriage...", by Emmanuel Udom, in *All voices: Local to Global News, Lagos, Nigeria, November 13, 2010*, accessed on: 09/12/2010, at: <http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/7324649-369000-girls-drop-out-of-school-over-forced-marriage>

<sup>69</sup>. Ibid

<sup>70</sup>. Ibid

liaison industry. Participants were unanimous that the most worrisome aspect of the problem is the tender age at which some of these young women and school girls get lured into sexual liaisons. Participants pointed out that the situation is further aggravated by foreign expatriates' preference for young adolescent girls who are the future of the Niger Delta economy and society. This dimension of the problem is one of the greatest effects of sexual liaisons that the Niger Delta society has live with.

There is no gain saying that education is an important denominator in determining a woman's capacity to take decisions on reproductive health rights. The educational level of a woman has dialectical relations with her capacity to withstand social and economic challenges and to contribute positively to the development of her children, immediate family as well as the general human society. Others have also argued that "a woman's level of education is a determining factor in her time of marriage, reproductive health rights and her role in decision-making"; and that education would "also have a tremendous impact on the health and nourishment of her children" and is a key means to social improvement as a women's position within the family is integrally linked to progress in other areas"<sup>71</sup>. A women's educational status serves as an insurance of partnership, encourages "democratic family"<sup>72</sup>, improves equality in the home and is a check against any form of repression. By dropping out of school, young women and school girls in the Niger Delta are therefore virtually deprived of education, a fundamental right for Nigerian girls and young adults.

A corroborative study by Okonta (2007:113) on sexual and reproductive health of adolescents in the Niger Delta, also laments their "unhealthy sexual behaviour characterized by early age at sexual initiation, unsafe sex and multiple sexual partners". He blamed the "local socio-economic condition" for exerting "extra pressure on the adolescent with negative reproductive health consequences". Okonta called for an "urgent need to develop a time bound strategic framework and plan to redress this situation", but warned that "this will require the participation of all stakeholders".

Given the insecurity of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers, some of the women who retire or are forced to retire from the practice because of old age or other circumstances, always find it difficult and near impossible to integrate in society. Some of them also find it extremely difficult to secure new means of making a living. A participant

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<sup>71</sup>. See: "Nigeria-Women's burdens demand socialist action" in *Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM): For Struggle, Solidarity and Socialism in Nigeria*, 7 March 2007, accessed on: 09/12/2010, at:

<http://www.socialistnigeria.org/page.php?article=1222>

<sup>72</sup>. Ibid

points to the fact that others become problem not only to themselves and but to the entire society. This participant notes thus: “our community has a good number of women like that who don't have any contribution to make to society again; rather it is our community that is helping some of them manage their lives at old age”. This participant continued; “I know a couple of these women who now look to close relations to help them survive”. This participant observes that “apart from potential vulnerability to STDs, apart from venereal diseases, apart from HIV/AIDS, and the loss of self esteem from the community, these women suffer rejection from society”.

We probed further to find out what this participant meant by “loss of self esteem”. She explains that in all communities of the Niger Delta, women are grouped by age grades. Women age grades and groups exist in churches, markets, villages, and trades. These groups always come together to assist themselves in solving problems that affect their members in a communal way. Such groups also organise and assist in community and public works. Women who engage in sexual liaison activities are considered indecent and are usually ostracised by such women's groups. As they are ostracised from women's groups they also suffer similar fates in other social and communal settings in society. Another dimension of “loss of self esteem” is occasional ill-treatment in the hands of the go-between agents that recruit them for onward delivery to oil workers. The ultimate “loss of self esteem” is played out by the inhuman circumstances, sexual abuse, humiliation and molestations that these women are subjected to by their clients, the foreign oil workers.

The foregoing narrative fails to take into account the social contexts that are responsible for women's “loss of self esteem”. Besides just playing the blame game which put the genesis of the problem on the shoulders of women as victims who have brought their families and communities into disrepute, little is done by this pattern of narrative to help find ways to alleviate the situation. This pattern of narrative ignores the fact that the choices made by these individual women and young girls is driven by the history of an oil enclave economy that has historically disenfranchised them. We observe that the blame game fails to address what Ross describes as the “multiple systems that contribute to reproductive oppression, nor do they help develop strategies to engage all women and their communities in ending reproductive oppression”<sup>73</sup>. Without locating the core of the problem, it will be difficult to understand and address the root causes of the problem of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. The implications

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<sup>73</sup>. See: “Understanding Reproductive Justice”, *SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective*, by Loretta J. Ross, National Coordinator, May 2006, page 2, accessed on 11/12/ 2010, at: [http://www.sistersong.net/publications\\_and\\_articles/Understanding\\_RJ.pdf](http://www.sistersong.net/publications_and_articles/Understanding_RJ.pdf)

are that victims, their immediate families, communities and the larger Niger Delta society are all left to mourn, soliloquy and lament.

Ross's<sup>74</sup> corroborative article observes that the "ability of any woman to determine her own reproductive destiny is directly linked to the conditions in her community and these conditions are not just a matter of individual choice and access". Reproductive justice therefore deals with issues that "shape the competing ideals of equality and the social reality of inequality". To address the reproductive oppression of women at the national, state and local level, efforts should be made to understand the socioeconomic foundation of their sexual exploitation. This according her is because "the intersectional theory of reproductive justice" is all about addressing "the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, social, environmental and economic well-being of women and girls"<sup>75</sup>.

The important analytical thrust is the need to design economic intervention strategies that will adequately address the multiple systems of sexual liaison that contribute to reproductive oppression of women in the Niger Delta. Such strategies would go a long way to help develop strategies that will engage all women and their communities in ending reproductive oppression by the vestiges of the oil economy. We must construct "reproductive justice" as a "base-building analysis that focuses on organizing women, girls and their communities to challenge structural power inequalities in a comprehensive and transformative process of empowerment"<sup>76</sup>. This is because reproductive justice is an analysis informed by paradigm shift which "offers a compelling and more defensible framework for empowering women and girls and is relevant"<sup>77</sup> because, instead of focusing on divisive issues as the moral basis of sexual liaison in the blame game, reproductive justice analysis focuses on the oil enclave economy which is dialectically responsible for the origins of sexual liaisons and their consequences on the Niger Delta society.

One of the problems associated with transactional sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta is increased numbers of single parents among young adolescent school girls. As noted elsewhere, Nigeria has strong family values. Therefore single parenthood is not very popular in the Nigerian society. It is a practice mostly associated with Europeans. This partly explains why local women, who had been involved in sexual liaisons in the past and are left with 'fatherless' children, tend to be psychologically traumatised. The first reason has to do with

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74. Ibid, page 2

75. Ibid, page 1.

76. Ibid, page 2.

77. Ibid.

the difficulty some of them pass through in their struggle to get a Nigerian husband. Nigerian young suitors seldom patronise women who are known to have had sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers.

Another impact of sexual liaison identified by participants is the sudden rise in the divorce rate. Several factors were adduced for this. The involvement of married women in sexual liaison is said to have serious implications for communities. Hence these women still keep sexual relations with their husbands; it then means that there is the potential for the spread of STDs from expatriates to local communities. A participant states that her friend was divorced because the husband found out that she was secretly dating an expatriate. After the divorce, the woman got more involved with the expatriate to a level in which she succeeds in accumulating wealth and material reward. With her new found wealth and fame, she becomes an instant example of some one who has succeeded in the hustling business. She also became a celebrated reference point to other married women who perceive what she has done as success. Other married women are then motivated to start the hustling business. The implication is that the drive by married women to hustle for expatriate oil workers then began to spread rapidly to a point where the foundation of marriage and family institution in the Niger Delta is threatened.

Participants acknowledged that this negative aspect of sexual liaisons may not be wide spread, but it is a contributing factor to the instability of some marriages in the Niger Delta. This is the way a participant succinctly captures the problem: "Divorce is fast becoming a problem among our communities in the Niger Delta. It is one of the social problems that emerged as result of oil. Our marriage and family values are now under a more severe threat than ever before. This is one of the social ills that oil producing communities in the Niger Delta are confronted with. So as far as I am concerned, there are always exceptions in everything about life. You cannot rule out the fact that to a certain extent it becomes individualistic. We are talking about the Niger Delta that used to showcase various cultural values in which the family institution was held in very high esteem. For married women to now keep white boyfriends, shows how the society has degenerated because of oil. Once a married woman is involved in extra marital sexual relations, our family system is in danger". Another participant became emotional and to some extent, moralistic thus: "In as much as we are Africans and Nigerians, no married woman, no matter the economic impoverishment and pressure, should flirt around with foreign oil workers and disgrace her immediate community. Throughout the Niger Delta and Nigeria, there is no culture that permits or sanctions married women to flirt with men".

### **7.3 SEXUAL LIAISONS AND 'FATHERLESSNESS' IN THE NIGER DELTA**

This section presents participants' narrative on the ramifications of the economic, cultural sociopsychological implications of being a bi-racial 'fatherless' child in the Niger Delta. Responses from participants were not only revealing but brought out the social relevance of a family name to Niger Delta communities. The common narrative was that when a child that has a father wakes up in the morning, she/he goes to greet her/his father/mother and prepares for school. The father provides for the needs of the child and all items required in school. Children with fathers also enjoy the benefits of money for snack given to them to take to school by their fathers. 'Fatherless' children on the other hand do not enjoy such fatherly love, affection and care.

One of the major problems generated by sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers in the Niger Delta is the phenomenal increase in the population of what participants referred to as '*oil children*' or '*bastard children*'. The definition of *bastards* tends to: children born outside wedlock, by way of *ashawo* or prostitution, transactional sex or *ashawo* work (sexual liaison) with foreigners. An expanded explanation by participants holds that a *bastard* is a 'fatherless' child whose biological father cannot be authenticated or identified. Even in the age of DNA, it is always difficult to identify the biological fathers of bi-racial 'fatherless' children because most often expatriate oil workers do not reveal their identity and address details to local women. With concealed identity, there is very little that DNA can do. The situation is made worse because Nigerian agencies charged with responsibilities for immigration into the country and tracking illegal activities of immigrants have no proper records. Oil companies seldom release their staff information when requested to by private individuals and local women. These factors make it extremely difficult to trace the biological fathers of '*oil children*'. A participant placed the problem in perspective thus:

I am a youth leader whose focus is on human development here in Port Harcourt. I have also been involved in trying to solve the social problems faced by our sisters who come in contact with foreign oil workers. In some of the cases I have handled, the outcome has caused more sadness than joy. Some of these women have been abandoned with 'fatherless' children. And these children have no father, no parental love and care and no family name. These 'fatherless children exist as mere humans. They are culturally not part of the local communities in which they live because they are ostracised and rejected.

(Participant, Field work: 2008)



A participant took us on a slightly different interpretation of what constitutes a 'fatherless' or a bastard child. This participant claimed that a bastard child is considered rejected by his community even though in actual sense the child exists in the same communities. By rejection here the participant implied many things: (i) The child does not have rights to land, (ii) no rights to associate with people freely especially immediate age group and friends, (iii) the child is ex-communicated by maternal family members. We reminded this participant that it looks like he was describing a fictitious situation. He insisted and continued by stating that such children live isolated and individualised lives and their mothers watch the rejection of their children from the sidelines. Like their children, such a mother does not have property and inheritance rights. Given that mothers of 'bastard children' have in the first place violated traditional family values and the sacredness of marriage institution by having children outside wedlock, such mothers also stand accused, rejected and dejected. Like their children, such mothers are regarded as outcast in society.

Another participant countered that with modernisation; such traditions are no longer strictly observed by some educated families. But the majority of the families still insist on treating children whose biological fathers cannot be identified as 'bastards'. This may not be unconnected with the general disdain against the use of money by expatriate oil workers to lure young school girls and married women, only to later abandon them with pregnancy. The anger against expatriates is then vented on the innocent children and their hapless poor mothers.

Bi-racial 'fatherless' children left with single mothers are therefore one of the major social outcomes of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta. Almost every participant acknowledged that this aspect of sexual liaison is the most serious in the Niger Delta because it contributes to generating other social problems. The researcher was taken to the residences of some of these children. A participant tried to explain why unwanted pregnancy is to be blamed. She states thus:

Yes there are several cases of children that have been born out of *ashawo* with white people. You know that the *ashawo* sometimes thrive in an environment where alcohol and substance abuse is common. Therefore, these women and their male partners occasionally lose their senses and reasoning on safe sex to substance influence. Such situation can result into pregnancy and children. Some of these women are as young as between 16 years. Some of these women are so young that their parents would not even suspect that they are engaged in sexual liaisons with foreign oil workers. In most cases, the birth of a half-caste child always reveals the true story.

The issue that was repeatedly raised by participants was the fact that 'fatherless' children do not have family name. In the attempt to find out why the issues surrounding the concept of 'fatherlessness' of a child means so much to communities, participants were asked a series of questions on the social origins and meaning of 'fatherless' children and why such children were treated as social outcasts in society. Participants were unanimous that in Nigeria, as it is in the Niger Delta, a father is the man who takes responsibility for fathering a child, he is also expected to be physically, emotionally and psychologically present to support the mother in providing all the needs of a child. This is to ensure that the child grows in good health, security, safety and comfort of both mother and father. Mothers used to be in relative control of subsistence economy in pre-colonial times, but since the colonisation of Nigeria, Nigeria was transformed into a patriarchal society. With the entrenchment of patriarchal structures in the Nigerian economy by transnational companies, fathers now have more opportunities than mothers. The absence of a father in a Nigerian family therefore constitutes a serious social and economic challenge for a child that is classified as 'fatherless', because a father is expected to take care of both the mother and the child.

Within this cultural narrative, there is no room for an absentee father. A participant explained in the following way: "in the case of children born out of sexual liaison between our young women and foreign oil workers, the father exists only in mystery. These 'mystery fathers' come from abroad to work in the oil companies and when their contracts expire, they just go back to their country of origin leaving behind pregnant women. This explains why a child from such 'fathers' has no family name. In our society, a family name given to a child is usually derived from the name of the biological father. In this case the biological father is not known". We asked the question; what is in a family name? A participant simply said "every child born into any Niger Delta community is expected to have a biological father and to culturally bear the name of that father".

The researcher tried to interject by arguing that a child cannot be born without a biological father; and that the fact that a child is born presupposes pre-existence of a biological father. We probed participants for more explanations. While reactions from participants differed slightly, there was a generic theme that ran through. This was that children born out of sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers may have biological fathers, but culturally if those 'fathers' are not known and seen, they are socially and culturally defined as non-existent. A child whose Father's identity and family background is not known, or whose whereabouts cannot be found or located, is considered 'fatherless'. Fatherlessness is not defined in both biological and cultural terms. A biological father of a child is culturally

expected to perform his socioeconomic roles and duties to the child, the child's mother, the immediate family, village community and the larger society. In the case of bi-racial 'fatherless' children, the foregoing requirements do not apply.

A participant states that according to their culture, a father is not expected to exist only in the minds of people but must be physically there to interact with the child, the mother and society. On the event of death of a father at any time of a child's birth or life, family members automatically take responsibility for the development and growth of the child. In this case, the family name and history is known and passed on to the child or children as the case may be. A child whose father is not known is automatically regarded as 'fatherless' or 'bastard'. This participant explains further; "I am sorry if my language sounds demeaning and very crude, but that is the reality in our communities". Worried by this pattern of narrative, the research team probed further by asking participants to explain why a fellow human being could be regarded a bastard when she/he was fathered by a man and born by a woman? We also tried to explain to participants that there is one single process through which all humans are brought into existence in the world and therefore no child should be regarded as 'fatherless' or referred to as 'bastard'.

We questioned the foregoing dominant narrative but in the process, a more aggressive version was generated by our probing questions. This version defines a 'fatherless' or 'bastard' child as one whose father's genealogy is not known and cannot be traced or found. Such children grow up and cannot point to anybody as his/her father's lineage. A female participant quipped: "any child who cannot point to relations from the father side is a bastard because rights and obligations in our communities are claimed through the father side". The researcher was taken aback because this patriarchal pattern of narrative seems to cut across gender groups. Even women who had 'fatherless' children with foreign oil workers seem to have been coerced by the dominant narrative in society to accept the status quo. It is also important that when we visited some bi-racial 'fatherless' children, we found that they were not only tolerated but treated very well by relations of their mothers.

In one case, the mother of a 'fatherless' child volunteered to speak to us. She had a daughter with an expatriate oil worker. After she was abandoned by her expatriate sexual partner, she decided to relocate to the village because according to her "life was unbearable in Port Harcourt". She confessed that her parents forgave and accepted her back with the child. She explains that "although my daughter's biological father is not known by anybody except me, my father has always been there for her". She continued, "when I got married, my present husband accepted my daughter as his child". At the time of our field work, her

daughter was an undergraduate student in one of Nigerian Universities located in the Niger Delta.

The narrative from this woman is very important because it represents a relatively successful story of a 'fatherless' child that was somehow re-habilitated first by her maternal grandfather and later by a step father. We were allowed to interact with the daughter in question. She complained that the problem she has with her mother is that the identity of her biological father is still shrouded in mystery because her mother is not certain on where her father came from. She is always worried that she does not know her biological father. Although her step father accepts her as his child, she still bears a surname from her mother's side. This is abnormal because children do not take surnames from their maternal side. On why she is not bearing the surname of her step father, she pointed out that "although my step father has been very supportive by paying her school fees up to the university, his extended family members are yet to accept me as part of the family because they stopped me from bearing his surname".

Another challenge that constantly reminds her of her fatherlessness is that she is not always allowed to follow her other step siblings to the village during holiday periods. People from her step father's family have never failed to draw her attention to the fact that she is not part of their lineage. She also confessed that while at school she always feels isolated because some boys who know her background keep referring to her as 'fatherless' any time she refuses their advances. This is why she is always alone in the University. She is a very sensitive girl and hardly mingles with her peers. She told the research team that amnesia has always been her solution. She does not talk in class; she does not ask questions because she would not want to draw additional attention to herself. She told the research team that so many men have been making advances to her, but she has rejected all of them. She spends more of her time in the church. According to her, "with prayers, I hope to marry a man that will accept me, take care of me and make me forget the past".

While the foregoing narrative could be regarded as better than the situation of other bi-racial 'fatherless' children in the Niger Delta, there is a problem that the young girl is not accorded equal rights as other children whose father is known. This is the cardinal principle of fatherhood and sociological importance of family name in the Niger Delta. Children whose fathers are not known cannot hold their own in everyday encounters with life challenges in society. This explains why children born out of such circumstances are regarded as 'bastards'. Such children are constantly reminded of their unknown or 'fatherless' background by their peers, age grade, class mates and play mates. In some cases, they may be

completely avoided by these groups. This is the way a participant describes the father of his 'fatherless' friend: "his father is not only absent, but his identity is not even known; his father is like a ghost or an imaginary father". A good number of expatriate oil workers fall into the category of 'ghost or imaginary fathers. We pointed out elsewhere that foreign oil workers are usually contracted by Oil companies and flown into the oil enclaves in the Niger Delta without their wives. They are erratically nomadic because of the operational rhythm of globalized oil industry. Regardless of location, expatriate oil workers are usually posted to regions wherever and whenever their professional service is required. While in Nigeria, their sexual desires are usually satisfied by local women. As soon they are through with their contracted assignments, they relocate immediately leaving behind their lover women with children.

We tried to find out the reaction and feelings of 'fatherless' children to the foregoing narratives. Do these so called 'fatherless' children complain? What is their material situation? If they complain, can you please give us an outline of issues the complaint is about? Participants agreed that these children "complain seriously". Participants identify three categories of 'fatherless' children born out of sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. Participants also graduated problems faced by 'fatherless' children according to each category. The first category is those who grow with their mothers as single parents. This category may be said to be lucky because the children grow up under the tutelage and care of their biological mothers as single parents. The problem here however is that these single mothers are very poor and are not able to provide basic survival needs to the children. Without good education and availability of basic human survival needs, these children grow to be social problems to our society. Another problem often mentioned by participants is the fact that single motherhood is not culturally accepted in "our community".

The issue of single motherhood is not common in Nigeria and it is not culturally acceptable in the Niger Delta region. Participants concurred that "we are Africans" and a child is usually welcome and accepted into society with fanfare and celebrations. This is because the child does not belong to only the biological father and mother, but the immediate family, community and the entire society. A participant observed, "Our society does not allow a woman and a man to just give birth to a child as they wish; our society recognises the prerogative of woman and man to procreate according to its culture and values, as well as to nurture the child together. That is why our society does not encourage single motherhood". 'Fatherless' children brought up by single mothers also face the prospects of being rejected by their peers and age grades. Such children are always tormented by their age grades with

statements such as: if you say you are a child of this community, please tell us who your father is? The rejection of single parenthood is a way to ensure that members of society conform to cultural practices that protect the rights of an unborn child to have all his/her parents present when she/he is growing up. A participant interjected: “We are not as economically advanced as Europe and North America; the exploiters of our oil wealth, therefore we cannot afford to have a high population of ‘fatherless’ children roaming our streets”.

The second category consists of those children who are fortunate enough to be taken to orphanage homes. While children in this category may be said to have settled in one place, there is little difference between them and the first category because most orphanages lack basic social services in the Niger Delta. The third group is constituted of those children abandoned by their biological mothers on the street. For this category, childhood revolves around roaming the streets as urchins without a home, no sustainable provision of food, medical or other basic services. Those in the third category are more prone to being recruited into the rank and file of a fighting force of urban militants, or oil insurgency and criminal gangs.

According to a participant, “some of these ‘fatherless’ children abandoned by their biological mothers on the street, others who may be taken by foster homes, or/and those ‘lucky’ to live with relatives may not be better than slaves”. Therefore, fatherless children are prone to child slavery. The closest that a fatherless child may come to parental care is a single mother. Even with a single mother, there are countless challenges because, as mentioned elsewhere, there are limits to what a single mother can do for a child in a rundown economy and society like the Niger Delta. Just as our society is male dominated, the oil economy and the oil companies are also male dominated. Men have more influence in society and earn better incomes than women. Land ownership and other important assert yielding cultural institutions in our society like property inheritance are through a father and not a mother. Within such a setting, ‘fatherless’ children cannot inherit from their mother side. This is the daily life dilemma that confronts bi-racial ‘fatherless’ children. The dilemma is further compounded by the fact that their fathers are products of an enclave oil economy that dispossess and exploits the entire Niger Delta.

#### **7.4 CONCLUSIONS:**

What comes out from this chapter are the several socioeconomic implications of being regarded a bastard or a ‘fatherless’ child. The first challenge for the child is to try to trace her

or his father. This is a problem that must be solved otherwise the child will live with the 'fatherless stigma' throughout life. Some may struggle and try to trace their fathers but will fail. If they don't succeed, then the struggle becomes internalised in their minds and becomes a daily nightmare. For some, trying to find a solution to the bastard stigma can become a lifelong problem. Such people tend to live a demoralising life because being regarded as fatherless or bastard means that they are excluded from important social activities within their age grades, denied inheritance rights, rights to land, and rights to family property. They are also deprived from leadership aspirations in the community, at municipal and at national levels. With the denial of the foregoing fundamental human rights, they live depressed, stressful and isolated lives. They are in actual sense not part of society. They are considered as outcasts who do not belong. Most of them turn out to be angry all their lives, while some of them turn against their biological mothers and rebel against their immediate communities and society at large.

Fatherless children are therefore demoralised throughout their life. They are suppressed and oppressed. Their fundamental human rights are curtailed. In some circumstances the human rights of these children are outrightly denied. Since the abrogation of communal land tenure system in which women had a commanding control, the Nigerian colonial land use introduced a patriarchal land tenure system in which women worked agricultural land but men had absolute control of land and its proceeds. With the advent of colonialism, rights to land were bestowed on the state and those who control state power were men and not women. In the case of Nigeria, colonialism therefore helped to consolidate land and property rights which could only be traced through a father's lineage and kin relations, and not a mother's. Women are not allowed to inherit land or property of their fathers. Given changes occasioned by the colonial encounter, children born out of sexual liaisons could hardly lay claim to land from their maternal side. Given the already precarious situation of these children, they are not in any position to challenge these abuses and inhuman cultural practices in the court of law.

Denial of property rights is not the only problem; when such people become adult, they do not have right to aspire to leadership positions because they are always told about their 'fatherless origin'. Hence everything, including citizenship rights, is traced to one's biological father; they cannot be in leadership position. In some communities, they are denied participation in the social activities of their age grade, age group and friends. Most of them live depressed lives. It is this depression that pushes some of them to rebel against their biological mothers and family members who have refused to accept them as normal beings with full human and citizenship rights. Deprived of all rights and frustrated by society, some

of them become violent and take it against the larger society by joining armed gangs and militant elements. In the Niger Delta, some of them are active in the creeks in the fight against oil companies and kidnap of expatriate oil workers.

In our society citizenship is traced to the father and hence children born out of transactional sexual liaisons do not know their biological fathers, they lose everything that relates to citizenship rights. The first thing a child considered a bastard loses is the father's name. Without a father's name the child also loses any claim to belong to a particular family or family lineage. In the Niger Delta, as it is for the whole of Nigeria, children all trace their genealogy to their father's side. Without a father, these children have no surname. These are some of the problems that the oil economy has created and there are no official institutions to turn to for redress. This is the way a participant narrates her own side of the story:

Children born out of wedlock are not normally shown love by even their mothers. The existence of such a child only reminds the mother about her past tribulations and the challenges that lie ahead. Just imagine that a woman is pregnant for a foreign oil worker who tells her: look, I am not the father of your baby, take this money and take care of yourself and your baby. With this money I have paid you off. The woman will begin to hate herself. She will begin to see the child inside her as a burden. We have it on record that in some cases when half cast children are born, people who are economically buoyant are immediately given custody of such children. In some cases, these children are abandoned. It would shock you to know that Eket has one of the highest numbers of street and abandoned children in this region. The unfortunate thing is that some of these street or abandoned children are regarded by society as wizards and witches. In the midst of poverty as exhibited by an impoverished society like the Niger Delta, witchcraft has become a booming industry in which these category of children are further de-humanized. This is what oil has done to the Niger Delta economy and society.

The talk about witchcraft is an excuse by society that has been traumatised by the social and economic outcomes of oil extractive activities. The shame that is associated with witchcraft usually drives the mothers of these children out of their communities to relatively cosmopolitan urban areas like Uyo, Calabar, Port Harcourt, and Warri. A story was told by a participant of a 14 year old girl that had a child with a foreign oil worker. She was rejected by her family. She keeps lamenting her situation. More often her soliloquy was, "why is this child following me? There are thousands of grown up women who want children, yet you did not follow them. Why did you come to me?" With this kind of thinking by a tormented and traumatised young mother, there is the tendency to develop hatred against her innocent child. In such situation, the child is denied love by the very mother that should shower the child



with unlimited love. Such a child is denied emotional love, parental guidance and rejected by society.

A child who has not seen or experienced love, a child who has been denied love by his/her very mother, and society, may grow not to understand what love is for the rest of his/her life. Such a child is completely alienated. A participant volunteered thus: “We have several cases like these in the Niger Delta. Although the focus of your study is on foreign oil workers, I want to let you know that the Niger Delta also attracts Nigerians from other parts of the country. We have had cases in which Nigerians from other parts of the country come in here and impregnate young women and abandon them. These children keep searching and asking what they have done wrong and they cannot find answers”.

On the positive aspects, I want to say that some employers of labour are said to give preference to people with mixed racial background. Company gates and doors are more likely to be open to half cast applicants than a pure black skin whose parents are both Nigerians. Some oil companies tend to have soft employment policies towards Nigerian applicants from mixed racial background. This is an unwritten convention in Nigeria. This is not unconnected to the fact that these oil companies are aware of the sexual relations that some of their expatriate workers have had with local women in the past. This may seem to contradict the treatment of half-cast children by traditions in the rural areas where children born out of sexual liaisons are considered bastards. A participant averred that half-cast Nigerian graduates have a greater chance of being employed by oil servicing companies than their black skinned counterparts. It seems there is a correlation between sexual liaisons between expatriate oil worker and local women, and the soft employment policies of oil companies for mixed race applicants.

Another participant disagreed thus:

I have a slight disagreement with your position. While it is true that mixed race applicants are more likely to be employed by oil companies in the Niger Delta, it should be added that it is only those with the prerequisite qualifications that get employed. Oil companies do not compromise when it comes to professional skills required to perform some specific tasks. The fact that an individual is of mixed racial background does not automatically mean that such a person would be employed without possessing the necessary educational qualifications required for the job. What I think is happening in the Niger Delta is that applicants of mixed race with the prerequisite qualifications are given preferential treatment over their equally qualified black skin counterparts.

## **CHAPTER 8: SEXUAL LIAISONS, 'FATHERLESS' CHILDREN AND DEEPENING CRISIS OF CIVIC INSTABILITY IN THE NIGER DELTA**

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### **8. INTRODUCTION**

The history of oil insurgency in the Niger Delta, including the recent amnesty program for former militants by the Federal government, has always omitted the role played by the salient phenomenon of sexual exploitation of women. This chapter therefore weaves together ethnographic field data that show that the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of women in the Niger Delta debacle has always been a thing of concern. Little attention has been focused on the intersection of sexual liaisons and 'fatherless' children and deepening crisis of civic instability, high profile oil insurgency, armed militant activities, kidnapping of expatriate oil company workers and general state of insecurity in the Delta region. Nor have contemporary writings on oil insurgency stopped to take a second look at the significant role played by sexual liaisons and the social effects such as abandonment of 'fatherless' children. This chapter presents participants' understanding of the intricacies of the intersection of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and deepening civil instability in the Niger Delta.

In doing so, this chapter's analysis of oil insurgency goes beyond the usual official position that insurgents are criminal gangs and the conventional perspective that limits its conception of oil insurgents to mere resistance movements against the exploitation of hydrocarbon deposits and environmental degradation. Rather, this chapter adopts an extended analytical approach whose foci interrogate other salient and genuine social factors that contribute to oil insurgency. The thesis here is that several variables contribute to oil insurgency in the Niger Delta and, according to participants' narrative presented in this chapter, sexual exploitation and violations of local women, and their abandonment with 'fatherless' children by expatriate oil workers, contribute significantly to youth restlessness and violence against oil companies and foreign personnel.

Abandonment also creates all form of social, cultural and economic effects. Some of the social effects include the emergence of single mothers having to cater for bi-racial fatherless children. Other implications for immediate family and communities include

disruptions of traditional family systems and cultural values. As for the effects on the oil industry, narrative by our field research participants suggests that some of the frustrated 'fatherless' children constitute recruiting grounds for would be oil insurgents or militants.

These are the issues that pre-occupy this chapter. Our qualitative field research data suggest that 'fatherless' children in single-mother families or caretaker settings are at great risk of being subjected to social and economic deprivation. Their background also affects their growth and personality development in several ways. Generally, the absence of a primary socialising agent, most often father, has always had direct effects on both childhood and adulthood of children.

In the Niger Delta, the absence of expatriate fathers of 'fatherless' children undermines the role that a father is expected to play as a mediator and provider of security and a guide against negative influences. An important finding of this study is that the emotionally and economically strained, and often socially isolated and abandoned conditions of mothers, has over the years had both direct and indirect effects on bi-racial 'fatherless' children in the Niger Delta. It is within the context of the foregoing that this chapter situates the tendency for 'fatherless' children to become aggressive against oil companies and their expatriate personnel in the Niger Delta. This chapter therefore argues that given the social and economic constraints faced by abandoned offspring of expatriate fathers, it is logical that they would be aggressive against the oil industry and all that it represents in the Niger Delta. This chapter begins by presenting community leaders' ethnographic analysis of how the logic of pre-colonial cultural canoe houses and boat regattas which was purely for sports, survival in a difficult Niger Delta environmental terrain and later entertainment, have been adopted by contemporary oil insurgents in their operational logic.

## **8.1 CANOE HOUSES AND BOAT REGATTAS AS FORERUNNERS OF OIL INSURGENCY: A NARRATIVE BY COMMUNITY LEADERS**

During the field research, participants and particularly community leaders and elders presented a narrative on how the famous Canoe Houses or cultural boat regattas which were a reflection of environmental survival instincts of the people of the Niger Delta, metamorphosed first into youth street vigilantes, and later transformed into full scale oil insurgency. Community leaders interrogate the social and economic settings that they think best explain why purely cultural and environmentally driven boat regattas became impetuous social kinetics that energise youths in their militant resistance to the extractive activities of Transnational Oil Companies and the Nigerian state. Participants hold strongly that the

debate over youth militancy in the Niger Delta has often omitted how culture and ecology intersect over time and how the mechanism of such an intersection was hijacked and now manifests in the form of oil insurgency. Their narrative holds that in pre-colonial and pre-oil Niger Delta; Canoe Houses engaged in competitive games like boat racing. The objective was to competitively determine which canoe house can bring down or capsize the opponent's boat on water around the creeks and or even on coastal waters of the Atlantic Ocean. These were not only healthy competitions but honed survival instincts in a treacherous and difficult environmental terrain.

In the Niger Delta, water, the thick mangrove forests and swamps have always been an important source of defence in cases of war or foreign invasion, a part of the history and development of the people of the Niger Delta. Therefore the use of the Niger Delta environment as a defence mechanism by youths in the form of militancy is neither new, surprising, nor out of place with history. Generations in the Niger Delta have lived and survived on water. They therefore understand the logic and spirit of water as an important source of defence. A community leader commented: "water has always come to the rescue of our people in cases where an enemy or enemies are pursuing us; the simplest act of defence is taken by a deep swim inside the water to come out at the other end into safety". He continued: "This is what is referred to as 'invisibility'".

This art of 'invisibility' has been passed down from one generation to another and has continued to give strength and confidence to the people of the Niger. Under the presence dispensation, youth militants have cultivated and imbibed these cultural habits in their oil insurgency tactics against the Nigerian security forces and oil companies. Crawford (2009:9) corroborates and describes how similar 'invisible' manoeuvres and strategies are employed by militant groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) thus: "MEND implemented guerrilla tactics such as swamp based manoeuvres; utilizing rundown single-engine outboard motorboats used by local fisherman to quickly attack or hijack an operation. Their boats were disguised from outsiders". One of our research participants also interjects:

Please permit me to correct a few issues and impressions often created by people while discussing the origins of youth militancy on the creeks of the Niger Delta. When we talk about the cultural background of the boat games and what we refer to as youth militant activities in the Niger Delta today, first of all, I want you to know that culture is a way of life of the people. A way of life is about the things you come to see that your community, family or immediate parents do. At different times of the year in the

Niger Delta, there are traditional and cultural plays, festivals and sport games that communities engage in at different intervals and periods of the year. At some point, because of the influx of Africans and Nigerians from other regions into the Niger Delta, such people are usually not used to our cultures and festivities.

(Field research participant: 2008)

The dominant narrative from participants is that the presence of these other Africans in the Niger Delta has over the years contributed to the transformation of these festivals from purely cultural entities into avenues for entertainment and recreation, later to be employed as mechanisms for militant services when the need arose. So these cultural practices that were hitherto practiced as traditional rituals and deity worshipping gradually became a source of entertainment and in some cases as carnivals in the Niger Delta area. Most popular were the boat regattas, which have come to be a national tourist attraction in the national monument and calendar of Nigeria. After a deep review of the origins of the boat regattas, our research participants came to the conclusions that these competitions were meant to build the spirit of sportsmanship and competition between various Canoe Houses. Houses are used here by participants to refer to clans, villages or families. Each house has a boat or fleet of boats; each house has professional canoe men and women who are expected to be experts in paddling boats. So at certain times of the year, these houses engage in healthy competitive boat paddling. For tourism purposes, it has now become the boat race.

The literature also corroborates participants' narrative on the place of Canoe Houses in the life of the Niger Delta people. The Delta as a geographic unit and a unique environment is largely defined by water. Water serves what Anderson and Peek (2002:25) refer to as "a leitmotif for the region's arts and cultures", because "it draws disparate peoples together by providing them with a sense of a shared identity". To that extent, "throughout the Niger Delta, people celebrate their aquatic lifestyles both on land, where they pantomime fish hunts and paddle imaginary canoes, and on water, where they stage a variety of nautical displays". It is therefore no surprise that "shrines house paddles and fishing gear, songs mimic the lapping of waves, and dance steps evoke the flickering movements of fins and fish tails". Anderson and Peek (2002:25) describe it thus:

Festivals almost always feature waterborne activities, ranging from athletic events like blindfolded canoe races to rituals that include offerings to water spirits. Ceremonial war canoes parade noisily along the region's myriad waterfronts, festooned with raffia and spewing smoking medicines. Similar boats, loaded with boastful competitors and their rowdy supporters, announce their arrival at wrestling meets with bells, drums, and horns. Well-dressed mourners travel to funerals aboard

"engine boats" that serve as modern "dance canoes," and revelers transform ordinary barges into floating discos. Canoes and rafts ferry imperious "water spirits" to masquerade venues.

The work of Anderson and Peek conveys the extent to which "the festive spirit of a regatta and aquatic masquerades through videos and photographs". Pictorially, their work "pays tribute to aquatic modes of transportation through a display of art forms that includes canoe masks and paddles". *Ways of the Rivers* also shows that in the Niger Delta, "paddles can serve as spirit emblems, shrine furnishings, and dance props as well as equipment for propelling canoes" (Anderson and Peek: 2002:25). They also state that "the extreme wateriness of the Niger Delta clearly creates boundaries and opportunities for its human inhabitants" (Anderson and Peek (2002:14). The foregoing explains in part why Niger Delta's unique natural environment has also impacted similar cultural traits among the people. It also explains why "peoples throughout the region celebrate their riverain lifestyle by mounting aquatic displays, including dazzling regattas" (Anderson and Peek: 2002:17). Because the Niger Delta is dominated by saline swamps and crisscrossed by a labyrinth of creeks and rivers, the canoe has always been indispensable in the culture, socioeconomic survival and trading activities within and without the region. This explains why the Niger Delta economy and society have historically been organised and run on the format of Canoe Houses<sup>78</sup>.

Dike's (1956) outstanding historical studies confirm that Canoe Houses were indeed the pivot of social and economic organisation. Dike also averred that all units of cooperative trading and local institutions of governance were usually composed of a wealthy merchant or its founder, including his family, and all numerous slaves owned by the merchant. A prosperous Canoe House "could comprise several thousand members, both free and bonded, owning hundreds of trade canoes", and in "this intensely competitive society, leadership by merit – not by birth or ascriptions – was necessary if a house was to make headway in the turbulent, cut-throat competition that existed between houses"<sup>79</sup>. The implication was that "any person with the charisma and proven ability, even if of servile birth, could rise to the leadership of a house". The case of Jaja of Oapobo who became king is exemplary<sup>80</sup>.

Anderson and Peek's (2002:13) *Ways of the Rivers* also interrogates "the relationship between culture and environment", including "images and representations", their "different

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<sup>78</sup> See "Biography: JaJa of Opobo", accessed on 07/27/2010 at: <http://www.answers.com/topic/ja-ja-of-opobo>

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

uses and manifestations". *Ways of the Rivers* not only took a critical look at cultural borrowing and intergroup relationships in the Niger Delta, but "highlights two recurrent themes in Niger Delta cultures: water and war". Anderson and Peek (2002:13) acknowledge that throughout the Niger Delta "and well into adjoining mainland regions-people associate water and water spirits with well-being, fertility, and prosperity". They also observe that the "water ethos" in the Niger Delta is so overwhelming in the social and economic life of the people that it "surfaces in shrines, masquerades, and rituals associated with water spirits, as well as in aquatic exhibitions and performances on land that incorporate canoes and paddling displays". While accepting that "though underlying beliefs tend to be more disparate", Anderson and Peek (2002:13) also state that the "warrior ethos" in itself manifests "in virtually all Delta cultures in a group of related images and practices that emphasise masculine strength and assertiveness", and that "sometimes the two merge, as when ceremonial war canoes appear at festivals or when maskers impersonating water spirits aggressively pursue spectators with their machetes".

A community leader acknowledges both the historical and cultural significance of competitive boat paddling in the lives of the people of the Niger Delta. Of significance, he identified the respect that Niger Delta communities give to the rivers and water sources around them. In the competition, some boats get capsized deep inside the river or along the Atlantic coast. In such competitions, there is usually no provision for rescue missions for capsized boats. The idea is not only to win the race, but to build the spirit of endurance and resilience of competitors whose boat has capsized. In the spirit of sportsmanship, those with capsized boats are expected to celebrate with those who won the competition. The meaning of this is that it mystifies the fear of the river or big body of water. It is also meant to show that competitors have mystical and spiritual prowess that make them 'invisible' deep inside the water. This is also reflected on the costume worn by competitors.

Anderson and Peek's (2002:17) perspective only corroborates participants' narrative, but goes beyond it to provide the historical context thus:

In the Niger Delta, men tend to be more closely associated with warlike, land-based spirits; women often have stronger ties to water spirits, who are thought to bring children. Although a display of Ijo and Urhobo carvings in the exhibition includes maternity and other female images, many of the figures depict males and express the region's warrior ethos. Ijo shrines typically portray forest or bush spirits as superhuman warriors with aggressively projecting features; when displayed in shrines, these forbidding images protect the community from evil spirits and other dangers. The stunning example shown in Figure 5 may represent a warlike spirit known as

Tebesonoma, or "Seven Heads," who appears in the Ozidi play, a performance staged in villages throughout the area. Multiple glass eyes enhance his aura of supernatural vigilance and vitality. White markings probably denote his status as a titled member of the Peri warrior society. Although not clearly identifiable, the surmounting animal recalls stories about warriors who transformed themselves into leopards and other animals during battle.

Participants recognised that cultural belief in 'invisibility' is very important in the orientation and training of young people in the Niger Delta. They also acknowledge the extent to which present day insurgents key their spiritual training and operational orientation to the origins and history of boat paddling competitions handed down from one generation to another. The militants of today in the Niger Delta are therefore not doing anything new, rather they are cashing in on a cultural practice that has been with the people for a long time. This historic and cultural connection partly explains why conventional warfare, even with its super weaponry and mechanised military fire power, cannot win the 'oil war' against local militants in the creeks of the Niger Delta.

Still on 'invisibility', participants submit that a couple of the militants believe that their bodies are invisible and that their bodies cannot be pierced because of the cultural and traditional practice and ancestral protection they possess. This mental state of mind pushes them to dare oil companies as well as the Nigerian navy and other official armed security forces. That in itself is an important weapon which has tended to sustain the oil insurgency and militancy but has been ignored in the narrative of the problem by scholars and international experts. A community leader reminded the researcher that: "In those days, each of these canoe houses keenly contested the boat padding race with the zeal to win. Like horse racing, canoes were symbols of strength and authority in the community. Some houses were known for success because they won the competition several times. Those canoe houses that persistently fail to win over a period of time were considered as weak houses".

Furthermore, on the cultural concept of 'invisibility', youths who engage in militant activities channel their morale, energies and mentoring by routinely recreating and identifying with symbols that represent successful canoe houses. These militant youths routinely celebrate and mobilise their followers by making reference to the exploits and successes of famous canoe houses. They therefore cultivate discipline in their rank and file by making reference to successful canoe houses. This approach helps to instil discipline, and encourage competitive spirit and the drive for excellence in the struggle for the cause they have set for themselves. So everybody wants to go out there in the sea with his canoe, be



invisible, conquer the enemy (i.e., foreign oil workers or Nigerian security forces) and come back successfully un-harmed.

The foregoing narrative paints a picture of the psychosocial strength of oil insurgency and its relationship with the history of canoe culture in the Niger Delta. We are talking of young men and, in rare cases, women who go to the creeks and stay for months and are not bothered because they come from a history and cultural orientation that sees the creeks and large bodies of water as their abode. This is not the case with either foreign oil workers or the Nigerian security forces that rely on conventional means. These boys and girls can swim for very long distances. For them, water is a natural environment.

In “alienation and militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta”, Cesarz's (et al.: 2003:2) analysis and conclusions corroborate the foregoing narratives. This is the way they put it:

They brought to the confrontation new assets: rocket propelled grenades, AK-47s, machine guns, satellite phones, and speedboats. They demonstrated a willingness, and ability, to kill Oil Company and Nigerian military personnel and credibly threaten oil sector infrastructure. Quickly, they proved their dominance of Delta waterways and ability to impede the passage of security agents. They handily overpowered the 1,000 Nigerian troops deployed to quell their assaults, provoking a humiliating retreat into the ChevronTexaco compound.

Amazing convergence of opinions from participants' narrative holds that when a child is given birth in Ijawland and other riverine communities in the Niger Delta, the child is usually taken and placed in the ocean or nearby river and left there for a day or two. The child is adequately fed before a calabash is tied around the baby and is submerged into the water. It is a kind of initiation into the world of water. The essence is to establish in the child that he/she is from the river environment and he/she cannot be beaten by the river or external enemies. The child is socialised to know that he/she is greater than the river. We can imagine, a defenceless and innocent child being submerged into water and left there for one or two days to survive and come out un-hurt. Even if these patterns of narrative were folktales or fairy tales, the fact is that these tales energise the youth both physically and psychologically.

The child is made to believe that he/she was kept in the water for over 24 hours and all the aquatic wild animals could not do any harm to him/her. The picture that is painted to the youths is that they are not only invisible but a special breed of human beings. By such orientation, Niger Delta youths are taught not to doubt the mystical powers of water spirits and ancestors. There is some strength of power within the water that is recognised by all

communities in the Niger Delta. So these cultural antecedents give a bite as well as a push to the confidence and successes of oil insurgency in the Niger Delta.

Beyond the foregoing, participants opined that boat regattas or competitions have been modernised to the extent that young men are imbibing not only the successes of legendary canoe houses but have gone further to improve the art and science of canoe paddling. Youth groups or pseudo types of age grade canoe houses began to emerge with modern techniques of canoe regatta competitions far beyond ancestral practices. Some of these youths even began to organise inter-street football competitions in what has been popularly captioned by the Nigerian media as 'street gangs'<sup>81</sup>. These youths played their inter-street football games without any incidents. Of course they had 'gang' leaders who guided and ensured that they carried out their activities in a peaceful way. With the passage of time and in the absence of any meaningful government intervention to channel the energies of these youths into to positive use, this development became very relevant for the physical and emotional recreation of youths in the Niger Delta in the 1970s through the 1980s.

These gangs and their leaders were tough but disciplined until the 1980s when Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) implemented by the infamous Babangida military junta upset the social and economic fabric of the Nigerian society. In *Structural Adjustment, Oil and Popular Struggles: the Deepening of State Legitimacy in Nigeria*, Obi (1997a) adequately addressed these issues and we would not want to repeat him here. The level of pollution of both the natural environment and water resources by the oil industry had also reached a breaking point in the 1990s. Besides nationwide mass protest against the harsh effects of SAP otherwise known as 'Sap riots' in Nigeria in the 1980s and 1990s, the foregoing situation metamorphosed into the mass protest against the oil industry in the Niger Delta especially after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and nine others in 1995. These state executions and high handedness of the Nigerian security forces in the Niger Delta contributed to the transformation of pseudo-canoe houses and street gangs and their gradual metamorphose into splinter militant groups.

According to one community leader; "this point is often lost when you 'experts' from the university analyse youth militancy in the Niger Delta". This participant also states that, if Nigeria had a government with a nationalistic purpose, the energies, confidence and self

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<sup>81</sup>. See: Niger-Delta Peace and Reconciliation Report - Executive Summary, the Potential for Peace and Reconciliation in the Niger Delta, *Next Newspapers online*, May 25, 2009, accessed on 14/12/2010, at: [http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/News/3841050-147/Niger-Delta\\_Peace\\_and\\_Reconciliation\\_Report\\_.csp](http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/News/3841050-147/Niger-Delta_Peace_and_Reconciliation_Report_.csp)

discipline of these pseudo-canoe houses and street competitions by youths would have been channelled into positive endeavours in the Niger Delta. But that was not to be. The oil boom that Nigeria experienced within the same period created a few very rich elite who developed illusions about what oil wealth can do, but did not think of what oil cannot do. These countless illusions by the Nigerian state and its parasitic elites created armies of unemployed youths including university graduates in the Niger Delta. Structural Adjustment policies of the late 1980s and early 1990s, created what can be regarded as the 'new poor'. This was a situation where former employees like bank managers and top and middle level public and private sector workers were retrenched as part of the conditions for the IMF credit (Obi: 1997a; Gandu: 1992). During our interview sessions, a community leader stated that the implementation of SAP was an important catalyst that facilitated entrance of university graduates from his community into oil insurgency. University graduates also facilitated the construction and articulation of new ideology to guide militant groups. With the emergence of civilian government in 1999 came the availability of small arms supplied to some of these youth gangs by the various factions of the political class, especially in the Niger Delta. By this time, youth militancy had gone beyond pseudo canoe houses and disciplined street gangs witnessed in the 1970s.

Therefore, corruption and mismanagement of oil resources are root causes of the formation of oil insurgency in the Niger Delta. Young people born into a society that does not enable a structural way of growing socially and economically into adult life are bound to take to odd activities as sources of survival. That is the situation in the Niger Delta that in part fuels oil insurgency.

Another dimension of the oil industry which encourages the growth of youth militancy or insurgency has to do with oil company policy. Most oil companies come into the Niger Delta not only with their heavy equipment, but also with expatriate engineers and technicians from Europe, North America, Asia and elsewhere. Local personnel are also recruited from their Lagos head offices. This makes it extremely difficult for Niger Delta professionals to gain employment in the oil industry. Beside extracting and taking crude out, there is also capital flight out of not only the Niger Delta economy but the country through the massive presence of foreign oil workers in the industry.

The foregoing section has demonstrated the terms of the Nigerian oil enclave economy which is characterised by the "politics of plunder" (Obi: 2006a:5). Niger Delta youths have not only tapped "into local /traditional idioms of power, knowledge and accountability", but employ their knowledge of the history and practice of boat and canoe regattas to "resist the

theft” of oil resources which they consider to be part and parcel of “their natural heritage” (Obi: 2006a:5–6). The imagery of ‘invisibility’ does not simply call attention to or describe the reality of how oil insurgents derive strength and impetus from ancestral boat regattas, but how it has continued to play an integral and inextricable role in constituting reality in contemporary oil insurgency.

## **8.2 SEXUAL LIAISONS, ‘FATHERLESS’ CHILDREN AND OIL INSURGENCY IN THE NIGER DELTA:**

For you to understand the relationship between sexual liaisons and militant activities, you need to know that the major problem of host communities in Rivers state is what I regard as oil inflicted poverty. This poverty has gone to the point that our women mostly in riverine areas survive through ‘*ashawo*’ work. That is given themselves to the white men or foreign oil workers in exchange for marriage or other forms of material support. The women actually use such material support to take care of themselves, their immediate families. A good number of our adolescent women are not attending school. I can assure you that because of absolute poverty, some parents give out their young daughters out to agents to facilitate contact with foreign oil workers. We have all the hydrocarbon mineral resources in the Niger Delta that should take our people out of poverty. Yet our two major problems in this region are poverty and unemployment. The most attractive and available work is to do ‘*ashawo*’ with oil workers.

(Field research participant: 2008).

Aspects often ignored in the debate on oil insurgency in the Niger Delta are the correlations between sexual liaisons, the phenomenon of bi-racial ‘fatherless’ children and deepening crisis of civic instability in the oil rich region. As in other regions of Nigeria, most of the youths in the Niger Delta look up to young women and girls in their villages as prospective wives. But because of the sharp income disparity which is skewed against local youths, foreign expatriate oil workers tend to be more attractive to local women. This in itself is a source of tension and does influence violence and the kidnapping of foreign oil workers by militant youths. In the words of a participant: “this situation is made even more complex when a local woman is ‘used and abandoned’ by foreign oil workers”. When asked to explain what she mean by “used and abandoned”, the participant states thus:

By ‘used and abandoned’, we mean a situation in which a local woman is sexually exploited or impregnated by foreign oil worker and left to bear the pains of single parenthood, societal rejection, economic challenges and care for a ‘fatherless’ baby. Let me tell you, the desire to take revenge against foreign oil workers by Niger

Delta youths is fuelled when a Niger Delta woman is abandoned with *oyinbo* (bi-racial) 'fatherless' child. An *oyinbo* child keeps the memory of oil exploitation, environmental degradation, as well as the oppression and exploitation of our women in the Niger Delta alive. This memory also fuels both present and future violence and attacks on oil facilities and kidnapping of foreign oil workers and sailors on the Niger Delta waters.

In trying to find out whether there is a link between the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and oil insurgency, we asked participants a generic question: What has been the response of 'fatherless' children against the oil economy and society in the Niger Delta? Responses from our research participants vary. Their views were however informing and revealing. Majority of participants agreed that 'fatherless' children often do retaliate against both the oil economy and society. There was also a consensus that their reprisals on the oil infrastructure have largely been in the form of violent attacks on oil facilities and kidnapping of expatriate oil workers.

On how the phenomena of sexual liaisons and 'fatherless' children play into youth militancy in the Niger Delta, participants' responses agreed that there is some sort of relationship. They tried to explain the social mechanics of 'fatherlessness' that emanates from sexual liaisons of local women with expatriate oil workers and oil insurgency and how it intersects with oil insurgency. First, participants unanimously agreed that philosophical trust of oil insurgency is not to commit criminal acts nor create chaos and unrest in the Niger Delta. Rather, the first social mechanics is that an unemployed and restless youth in the Niger Delta, whether 'fatherless' or not, possesses the tendency by virtue of his or her material economic condition to lose self confidence. It is worse for those youths who are fathered and abandoned by expatriate oil workers. In the absence of any avenue for dialogue and rehabilitation in society, the most attractive alternative left for a 'fatherless' and street child is to attack the infrastructures of the oil industry that they think perpetuates their sufferings. These infrastructures do not only include oil facilities and platforms, but also foreign oil workers who personify the physical presence of oil companies, the perpetrators of sexual liaisons and generators of bi-racial 'fatherless' children.

As for 'fatherless' children's response against society, research participants tended to give wide range of explanation. The absence of proper parental up-bringing, discipline and parental love combine with the rejection by peer groups and age grades, and the societal stigma of being 'fatherless, to drive such children to a point of retaliation, where they respond negatively against the very oil economy and society that has rejected them. Their negative

response against society takes diverse forms. The first is the tendency for these children to join street gangs, adolescent drug abusers and urchins. In the process, some of them drop out of school only to become hoodlums, miscreants, pickpockets in public arenas, petty thieves and to engage in shop lifting. In essence, some of them visit the very society that rejects them with venom of vengeance and violence. In the process, they either get killed or go to jail. Yet for some others, these processes prepare them for recruitment into militant groups as the foot soldiers in the activities of oil insurgency in the Niger Delta.

The deliberations on the place of gender in youth militancy and the kidnapping of foreign oil workers in the Niger Delta has always portrayed women as a passive and not an active group. Our findings from participants' narratives during in-depth interviews and personal life histories, however point to the contrary. The narratives indicate that ramifications of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons have always provided a strategic logistical line of support for the execution of militant activities in the Niger Delta. The narratives point to the fact that some women and girls involved in sexual liaisons with foreign oil company workers also collaborate with militant groups. In essence, some of these local women and girls are occasionally used as bait to lure foreign oil workers to places or locations where they could easily be kidnapped and used as bargaining tools in exchange for a ransom. The narratives on luring foreign oil workers exemplified how local women and girls involved in sexual liaisons in the region contribute to fuelling and sustaining the activities of militant groups. Like the role played by veiled Algerian women during the military liberation struggle against French colonial rule (Fantasia and Hirsch: 1995, Turshen: 2002), our findings show that some women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil company workers constitute hidden or veiled but vital operational elements in oil insurgency in the Niger Delta.

We also found that unintended pregnancy which is one of the notable outcomes of the sexual liaisons with expatriate oil company workers is also a source of fuel or a trigger issue for oil insurgency. Local women who are unable to procure abortion go on to have a delivery of 'fatherless' children. As noted elsewhere, participants' narratives continue to reiterate how some 'fatherless' children and their mothers live in the most deplorable socioeconomic conditions that drive them deeper and deeper into drugs and hopelessness. The consequences of 'fatherlessness' on some children have been devastating. With no hope for school, no homes to grow like other normal kids, no father to call their own.

These children are rejected and scorned by society and are damned by the Nigerian government. Given the fact that some of the mothers abandoned their children because of

socioeconomic pressure and emotional depression, such children grow in impoverished and dejected environments. While mothers go deeper and deeper into drug use and substance abuse, their female 'fatherless' children grow to repeat their mother's life challenges. The cycle is repeated generations over. The foregoing trajectory contributes its own share of fuel that energises youth to join militancy and oil insurgency in the Niger Delta.

The primary responsibility for socialisation in all human societies devolves on the family system. In the case of the enclave economies of Sub-Saharan African countries, the family system just like other social institutions has been subjected to the most severe social, economic and cultural assaults: first by colonial conquest and post-colonial dependent capitalist regimes, and second, by globalisation/market economy policies including Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and neo-liberal policies of privatisation.

Adesina (2010:1–2) argues that neo-liberal policies narrowed "the vision of social development" and the consequences have been extremely harsh especially on the poor in African enclave economies and societies. He posits that the extent of the impact is such that about 182 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa "sank into severe poverty between 1981 and 2005", and about "80 million new poor were created". He also observes that "successive cycles of neoliberal reforms have left many countries in a state of acute institutional crisis and undermined the little capacity for endogenous policy learning that many of these countries built in the period between 1960 and 1980".

The foregoing narrative takes the discussion forward by interrogating the effects of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between expatriate oil workers on the family system in the Niger Delta. The narrative also unveils a chain of manifest and latent roles played by social consequences of the phenomenon of children fathered and abandoned by expatriate oil workers on oil insurgency in the Niger Delta. The phenomenon of fatherlessness of mixed race children caused by expatriate oil workers demonstrates forcefully the direct social impact of oil enclavity in the breakdown of cultural practices and values of the family institution and marriage in the Niger Delta.

With increasing numbers of 'fatherless' or abandoned children being raised in single-parent families or by substitute caretakers rather than parents in the Niger Delta, our qualitative field data shows that the absence of expatriate fathers undermines not only the normal growth and personality development of such children, but takes away the normal fatherly role as a mediator and provider of security to the family, especially for children from social configurations or negative influences from the outside world. This is one of the disturbing findings of our field research work. The absence of an expatriate father has always

had both direct and indirect social effects on 'fatherless' children. Most of the effects are manifested or mediated by emotionally and economically strained, social isolation and abandonment.

Narrative by our research participants supports the view that the social and economic world view of abandoned 'fatherless' children in the Niger Delta is far more complex than is commonly assumed. Participants argue that given the cultural, social and economic constraints under which such children grow and develop their personality, the absence of a father means the denial of cultural, social and economic rights. As chapters one, two, three, and seven have shown, due to the patriarchal structure of Nigeria's oil enclave economy, the attachment of such children to their economically challenged and constrained mothers; cannot in anyway alleviate their social and economic problems. It is this unique social and economic constraint that also makes such children and young adults easy recruits for the rank and file of resistance and militant groups in the Niger Delta.

Given the enclave structure of the oil economy in the Niger Delta; a father-child relationship is not only important, but an enduring part of economic survival. There is therefore no gain saying that the absence of a father in such a patriarchal structured oil enclave economy would logically have a multiplying negative effect on 'fatherless' children. Within the family system, there are numerous reciprocal relationships, role demands, and expectations. It should be stated that socialisation of a child and young adults in Africa is not a simple stimulus-response as Western models would want to believe. First of all, the condition surrounding the birth of a child has direct bearing on the rights and obligations that such a child will enjoy from his/her immediate family and the community at large. Besides the fact that the child is not simply a passive organism shaped by the sociocultural and physical environment, the condition of the birth of a child also determines rights.

An interesting narrative came from a female participant who cited an instance of a young boy who got married to his beloved girlfriend in the village. Problems in the marriage however began when his wife went to the maternity ward to put to bed. The child that she delivered was bi-racial. Investigations found that his wife was impregnated by a foreign oil worker. Both the family of the wife and the husband were put under intense pressure. A dispute ensued between the two families. The husband was devastated, became agitated and he immediately abandoned his wife and moved to join militant boys in the creeks. The nightmare of this incident pushed him to partake in some of the high profile kidnappings of foreign oil workers in the Niger Delta. This is a clear demonstration of the linkages between sexual liaison, the memory of its impact and oil insurgency.



This female participant seems to be an encyclopaedia of social outcomes of the enclave structure of the Niger Delta oil economy and sexual liaisons. During my interview with her, she demonstrated an amazing knowledge of the anatomy of the relationships between the oil and sexual liaisons, youth militancy and oil insurgency. In our several interview sessions with this participant, she presented how this basic reality plays into the phenomenon of youth militancy and general resentment against expatriate oil company workers by indigenous communities. She presents an expanded description of the inter-play thus:

Like me, these women are also daughters, sisters, mothers, aunties. You should also know that we are potential wives. Let me tell you one pathetic story. A boy wedded a girl in the church in this community. He did not know that the girl had had a relationship with a foreign oil worker. After nine months of pregnancy he took her to the maternity hospital. She gave birth to a 'white' child (half Caucasian and half Nigerian). The young husband was upset. Since then, this boy left and joins militant boys in the creeks. If you go around you will hear similar stories like this one. They took our oil, they took our women. What have we done to them? Look at my life. I cannot find a Nigerian husband. Nobody is ready to marry me. I regret everything. Our government is doing nothing to control the sexual exploitation of women in the Niger Delta by foreign oil workers.

This participant also averred that youth militancy is a function of many contradictions in the Niger Delta. She repeated what other participants said, that children, who are unable to get proper schooling or stable employment, constitute both the main 'fighting force' as well as 'reserve army' of militant groups. In her words, "these abandoned children including my three kids, are the future militants in the Niger Delta." The lengthy discussions we had with her also unveiled the fact that poverty and general discontent associated with frustrations will always push young women to take to sexual liaisons. Her narrative corroborates Ibeanu's (2000:29) position that the Niger Delta crisis must be dialectically analysed because all the issues are inter-connected. Therefore to understand one aspect we need to also bring other aspects into our analytical framework because the Niger Delta host communities are not "internally monolithic" in terms of "class, gender, and generation."

The intensification of youth anger and militant activities against expatriate oil workers is demonstrated by the use of local women/girls as traps or baits to lure expatriates into becoming easy kidnap victims, thus showing the extent of frustration amongst youths. Participants were also unanimous that some of the women/girls that engage in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers no longer give attention to local boys. According to a participant, "given the problem of mass youth employment in the Niger Delta, our young boys cannot

take care of the needs of these girls, which is why our women prefer expatriates who have excess resources to spend". Participants were also quick to observe that in some cases, these women/girls share whatever benefits they derive from "sexual hustling" with their unemployed parents, brothers/sisters and in some case their boyfriends. This is also painful because sometimes the boys or young men are not happy as they keep depending on their sisters or girlfriends for economic support and survival. Frustration drives some of them to join the foot soldiers of militant groups. A representative of a militant group laments the situation and justifies oil insurgency thus:

Let me tell you. We are educated; we know what expatriate oil workers have done to our society especially our women. I want you to know that this war in the Niger Delta is not just about oil. Our oil has been taken, our environment destroyed, our women exploited and abandoned by expatriate oil workers. Some of these women are abandoned with children. These children grow not knowing their fathers. The young mothers left to cater for these 'fatherless babies' languish in poverty, pain, psychological torture and amnesia. In some cases, these children are first rejected by their own biological mothers. This is because some of these girls are very young, poor and not prepared for the challenge of motherhood. Similarly, some members of the immediate family and society at large do not always welcome children born out of wedlock. The challenge we have in the Niger Delta is that these young women are part of the pool from which our young boys and bachelors will pick their future wives. Our young men are therefore not happy that their future wives are messed up and abandoned. That is why we take the fight to oil platforms, kidnap foreign oil workers and blow out oil pipelines. This war is not just about oil. It is also about preserving our cultural identity and dignity as a people.

As noted elsewhere, these same women and girls involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers are also the future wives for the young boys within their communities. The implications are that these women and girls are also future mothers and grandmothers of their various communities. This is therefore a challenge for both the present and future cohesiveness of local communities in the Niger Delta. This factor explains why there is resentment of foreign oil workers by the youth in the Niger Delta. Resentment manifests in forms which include oil pipe blow-outs, militant activities, kidnappings, hijacking, piracy, etc. This is what oil has done to the people. A participant opined that they grew together with these women and girls in this village. Yet, "you cannot get their attention if you don't have money". In the pursuit for justice, young men are driven by a burning desire for justice and to reclaim the dignity of their communities. This is one of the reasons for militant activities. The whole essence is that there is injustice.

On the implications of sexual liaisons on the local Communities, participants agreed that sexual liaisons seem to increase the vicious cycle of poverty at different levels. These girls are members of the community, and they constitute agents who collect security information from the community and pass the same on to foreign oil workers. Expatriate oil workers relate with these girls and through these girls extract information about the community and what the community may likely be planning against oil companies. In some cases, these local women become a security risk to their immediate communities. These local women therefore help in consolidating the activities of oil multinationals.

Foreign oil company workers tap vital security information and details about resistance groups, and activists' plans and strategies from these women, which would have been very difficult to obtain even from the Nigerian security agencies. Some of these local women therefore act like double agents. In some cases, it becomes very difficult to determine whether their allegiance is with the community or the expatriate oil company workers who give them hard currency. A participant asked the researcher: "If these women leak our plans to the oil workers what do you want us to do? It was this consciousness of the complex intersection of sexual liaisons and insurgency that made Isaac Boro inveigle his troops thus:

For this reason, and for the good name of the Ijaws, do not commit atrocities such as rape, looting or robbery. Whatever people say, we must maintain our integrity. Moreover, you know it is against Ijaw tradition to mess about with women during war. You have been purified these many days. Be assured that if you do not get yourselves defiled within the period of battle, you shall return home safe even if we fail<sup>82</sup>.

In this case, one of the ways in which militant groups use sexual liaisons to their advantage is to infiltrate the practice with women and girls who will also provide them with vital information that they would need to confront the oil companies. A participant volunteered that they were able to successfully carry out a blast of an oil drilling platform with maximum damage based on information provided by a woman engaged in a sexual liaison with a foreign expatriate worker.

Sexual liaison is a double edged sword in the insecurity raging in the Niger Delta. For some, oil insurgents are reparation movements. Some participants conceptualise oil insurgency to be a reparation struggle. It is however a reparation movement that is not properly structured because it is spontaneous, clandestine, militant and not civil. The

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid

Nigerian state itself has over the years existed as a militant entity. Nigeria is a federation in name and not in practice. We should not be surprised that militant groups are taking a cue from the larger Nigerian economy and society. That also speaks volume of who is leading the campaign in the Niger Delta. When Isaac Boro was leading the campaign, and when Ken Saro-Wiwa was leading the campaign we know that they were disciplined, articulate, civil and focused. But today, militancy has become more or a less a lucrative industry. Today there are many militant groups each fighting its own battle, each with its own agenda and ideological orientation. There are countless militant leaders today. This phenomenon was and is still being orchestrated by the oil companies in conjunction with the Nigerian state's palliative policy of divide and rule in the region. Another participant injects with the following questions:

For us to understand the anatomy of militancy in the Niger Delta, we also need to take a second look at the operational structures of these groups. Who are the leaders of these groups? What are their antecedents? What do they represent in the eyes of the youths in the region? Why have the contradictions in the Niger Delta crisis created super role models in militant leaders? Do we have an idea of a four year old boy who sees a militant leader in the Niger Delta coming out and driving freely in town with Homer Jeeps with VIP treatment? What is in his mind? What are you making of him? What do you think is in the mind of a primary school child who sees a school dropout and known dreaded militant who drives around town in a convoy of Jeeps and expensive automobiles. What sense do you make when militant leaders are greeted with respect, fanfare, red carpet reception and treated like heads of state? What sense do you make of a situation where the Nigerian state oil policy makes militant leaders appear to represent what is regarded as the epitome of hope and success?. Do you think the burgeoning militant culture in the Niger Delta represent success? The problem is that the Nigerian oil policy has helped in planting what I regard a terrible seed of militancy. This seed is growing by the day. How does militancy intersect with the transactional sex industry at the domestic level?

Another participant complained thus:

Young girls perceive militant elements as representing success and would do anything to associate with such leaders. In the process the issue of sexual liaison which used to be in the dominant domain of foreign oil workers is taken over by locals who have become rich through militant activities. What this means is that the struggle in the Niger Delta is losing its team. Every one is struggling to see whatever he or she can get from the confusion and chaos. The struggle is not properly directed. Nobody bothers about the real implications and challenges that our people face daily. Nobody wants to ask- What does it means for a child to grow up seeing gas flames burning 24 hours non stop? A child grows up in an environment in which there is no difference

between night and day. Domestic animals and pets like hens, chickens, goats, cats, dogs and sheep are also affected by the problem of continuous bright skies illuminated by burning gas fires. Animals and pets reared in gas flaring environments have always found it difficult to adjust if taken to normal village environments where oil extractive activities and the problem of continuous burning gas fires and bright skies are non-existent. This problem is vice-versa. Domestic animals reared in normal village environments also find it difficult to adjust under continuous burning gas fires and endless bright skies.

Yet another participant had this to say:

Let me give a pathetic example that happens to a friend of mine. She bought a dog from a village community where gas flares 24 hours round. The dog was already used to seeing bright skies through day and through night. The concept of night was non-existent in the mentality of this dog. Suddenly, the dog was taken to a normal village community where day and night are clearly and distinctly separated by bright sky and darkness respectively. This dog has never seen darkness through out its life. The dog disturbed the entire neighbourhood. The lady was forced to return the dog to its original environment. This is a disturbing phenomenon in the Niger Delta, but little attention has been paid to it. It seems this problem has no meaning to the oil multinationals. These oil companies come from societies where human and animal rights are constitutional issues. Yet both humans and animals in the Niger Delta are treated as if we don't deserve those rights.

And again another participant states:

I was part of a group that specialised in kidnapping foreign oil workers for ransom. I left the group so that I could spend valuable time with my children. My children were living with my mother in the village. Being half-cast and without a visible father, my children faced so many challenges in the village and my poor mother could not cope. We are now living in Port Harcourt. You can see the surrounding. Is this the place my children should be living? Their fathers were Engineers with an oil servicing company here in Onne. I have made several visits to the company but did not get any financial support for the children. If I ever have a second chance of meeting their fathers, I will lynch them. This is one of the reasons why I support those fighting against oil companies.

One other aspect of our findings that needs to be highlighted at this juncture is our observation that the proliferation of militant groups is in itself an indication of the emergence of two contradictory tendencies in the crisis-prone region. First is the fact that genuine civil society grievances in the Niger Delta were deflated by both colonial and post-colonial state policies which dispossessed minority groups from controlling resources found in their

immediate environments. The second dimension of this contradiction has to do with the role played by the post colonial state in frustrating and in some cases physically eliminating genuine leaders and human rights activists who challenge the high handedness of the state on issues dealing with minority environmental rights in the Niger Delta. The mysterious execution of Isaac Akada Boro in the hands of the Nigerian federal troops and hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa with nine others by the Abacha military Junta in 1995 are all empirical examples.

The third contradiction which dialectically rests on both the first and second, is what has been described as 'subdued oil violence'<sup>83</sup>. It is the emergence of opportunistic militant groups who parade in the name of human and environmental rights activism. Given the infiltration of genuine community oriented environmental rights groups by Nigerian state agents, from the frustration and in some cases killing of genuine leaders and a human/environmental rights activist like Ken Saro-Wiwa, neo-militant groups emerged and transformed the ideology of community centred mobilisation and operations of resistant groups. These are the groups who perceive, run and operate militancy as an industry and employment institution. From the views expressed by participants during FGDs, life histories, in-depth interviews, as well as our field observations during field work, we can categorically say that the genuine civil society grievances of the people of the Niger Delta has somewhat been hijacked first by the Nigerian state and later by neo-militant entrepreneurial groups. On the surface, these neo-militant entrepreneurial groups present themselves as fighting for the interest of their people but in actual sense they are far from being the legitimate representatives of their communities.

Both the Nigerian state and oil companies are responsible for the emergence of neo-militant entrepreneurial groups. This is a marriage of convenience that was more pronounced between the Nigerian state and oil companies under the military regimes (1985–1998). This led to the implementation of strategies that “hunt down the true representatives of the communities, who were described as trouble makers and security risks. Many of them were killed, others went into exile, and most have been cowed. Illegitimate, government-installed chiefs, extortionists, and other charlatans filled the vacuum created by their exit” (Ibeanu: 2000:29). Ordinary citizens of the delta region are not only the victims of the correlations

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<sup>83</sup>See “Checkmating the Resurgence of Oil Violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria”, edited by Ojaborotu, V. and Gilbert, L. D. (2010), accessed on: 08/16/2010, at: [http://www.iags.org/Niger\\_Delta\\_book.pdf](http://www.iags.org/Niger_Delta_book.pdf)

between transactional sexual liaisons and youth militancy but are forced to watch the circus of the hijacking of their genuine civil society grievances from the sidelines.

During the field work, we wanted to find out strategies put in place by oil TNCs to circumvent the militant activities of youth, and a participant explains thus:

There used to be many expatriates working for Exxon-Mobil here in Eket. In addition to this is the fact that Exxon-Mobil has a standing contract and agreement with Bristol Helicopters. At some point before the intensification of the militant activities and kidnapping of foreign oil workers, Bristol Helicopters had her fleet of helicopters stationed in Eket. With increased activities of protest and agitation by militant youths for compensation for environmental pollution and better treatment of indigenous groups, Bristol Helicopters re-located to Lagos airport. Bristol Helicopters ferries these expatriates from Lagos to Eket air strip and back on a regular basis.

What it then means is that Exxon Mobil had solved the problem of possible kidnapping by agitating youths in Eket by relocating its expatriate staff to the safety of Lagos.

### **8.3 PARTICIPANTS' NARRATIVE ON THE DERIVABLE BENEFITS OF OIL INSURGENCY IN THE NIGER DELTA:**

During a focus group interview with a group of community leaders, one of them drew the attention of the researcher to the fact that "there are some positive aspects of youth militancy that can be acknowledged". This group made it very clear that the activities of oil insurgency have indeed brought pain and suffering to people in the Niger Delta. But, they also acknowledged that militancy and oil insurgency have helped to draw the attention of the International community to the plight of the Niger Delta people.

This group of elders also notes that "we are now old and living in this village, but we also know that the Noble Laureates of the world came together to hold a meeting on the Niger Delta". They insist: "there can be no other way to recognise the impact of oil insurgency on the International community than this". One of the participants specifically addressed the researcher thus: "Although the focus of your research is on sexual relationships between our women and foreign oil workers, I can tell you that the militant activities in the Niger Delta prompted you to undertake this research topic in the first place. Without the intensification of militant activities, nobody would have noticed that the problem has other grievous social dimensions which your research is investigating". The foregoing narrative by our research participants corroborates Anderson and Peek's (2002:12) assertion thus:

For Captain William Allen's contemporaries in the nineteenth century, the words "Niger Delta" were more likely to conjure up images of explorers succumbing to tropical maladies than visions of the majestic mangrove forests that line its coast. By the end of the twentieth century, Americans were largely unaware of the environmental devastation caused by their reliance on petroleum production in the oil-rich Delta, until the brutal execution of the Ogoni writer and environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa drew international attention.

One other participant also observes, "young men and women involved in militant activities are not enjoying what they are doing". He continued "please, understand that part of the rank and file of militant groups are university drop-outs". As noted elsewhere, our field observations and investigations indeed confirm that part of the leadership cadres of militant groups is drawn from unemployed university graduates. The opinions for and against oil insurgency freely expressed by participants, point to the fact that no university graduate will throw away the comfort of a decent life that a university degree provides and take to a guerrilla life in the creeks or treacherous water. The participant also points to the fact that these young men and women are human and, like other human beings, they would certainly like to live a normal life. But circumstances impose the need for them to fight for justice for the Niger Delta. One research participant analysed the complexity of oil insurgency and its potential as a source of employment to restless youths in the following way:

The media, Nigerian government and oil companies brand the Niger Delta militants as thugs, criminals and illiterates. These uncomplimentary remarks and insinuations do not explain the problem. The struggle in the Niger Delta has a long history. What we are witnessing today is a crystallisation of long years of suffering by the people of the Niger Delta. Violence in the Niger Delta is speaking to our oppressors. By adopting violence, our youth are sending a clear message so that somebody somewhere can listen and take action to ameliorate the problems created by oil. Until the oppressed shout about their oppression, the oppressors will not take them seriously. The Niger Delta inhabitants want to be taken seriously, not only in Nigeria, but also by the International community. In their struggle, the militants have evolved other ways of generating income for their survival through oil bunkering; tapping of pipelines, sabotage and kidnapping of foreign oil workers. These activities may be illegal, but they have become a source of employment for some of our youths.

On the benefits of militancy, a participant states that, "you need to taste the economic benefits derived by kidnapping foreign oil workers to know why it is difficult to do away with the twin problem of sexual liaisons and militant activities". This participant elaborated by pointing out that there is a direct link between the two. Sexual liaisons assist in facilitating



the kidnapping of innocent foreign oil workers. Ransom made from kidnapping helps to fuel logistics for further militant activities. One single kidnap can fetch a militant group some millions of naira. Some groups would demand payment in hard currency. This participant also observes that there is no formal employment that pays like kidnapping in the Niger Delta.

Another dimension of the problem is that Traditional rulers in the Niger Delta seem to be losing their legitimacy and authority to these militant youth who control the streets and creeks of the Niger Delta, because these militant youth are in command of resources. There is no job that can replace the monetary attraction of militancy. A participant notes that “militancy has become such a big ‘lucrative business’, which is ranked as the number one industry that employs the majority of Niger Delta youth”. This revelation may sound funny but that is the reality. It is difficult to talk Niger Delta youth out of militant activities because of the material benefits they derive. Participants pointed out that some of the choice property acquired in recent times in major Niger Delta cities is either owned by militant leaders or their associates. Beside the monetary power, militancy also comes with political power. As pointed out elsewhere, top politicians in the Niger Delta romance with militant groups. A participant opined: “If you check the history of the Niger Delta region since the emergence of Obasanjo’s ‘garrison democracy’, you will realise that it is difficult to emerge as a governor of any Niger Delta state without the support of powerful militant groups”.

Participants elaborate on ways in which militancy functions as a source of political ‘industry’ as well as providing employment opportunities for the youths. A participant put it this way: “I want to assure you that violence or the threat of violence has become an employer of labour in the Niger Delta”. This participant explained that during electioneering campaigns in the Niger Delta, youth violence is usually employed by contestants to snatch ballot boxes and to execute rigging mechanisms. After elections, when government wants to execute new policies, their officials usually rent youths to create an atmosphere of violence, disrupt the peace and instil fear into the populace. This creates the enabling environment for those in power to introduce unpopular, anti-people programs and policies. In the Niger Delta, both politicians and traditional rulers engage in raising and running rival violent ‘cult groups’. This is an indication that violence pays even at the highest level of leadership in the region. All these are manifestations of the failure of the oil economy to impact positively on the lives of the people. In the absence of a guiding principle and clear philosophy of what oil should do for the development of the people of the Niger Delta and Nigerians in general, violence and chaos take centre stage.

Other social dimensions in the discussion of the derivable utility of youth violence were brought to the fore by participants. This has to do with the intersection of oil company policies and militancy, and the extent to which violence has forced oil companies to reduce expatriate employment quotas. Participants provided robust narrative to show that violence has led to a change in oil company policy. They argued that Nigerian engineers or employees were not usually taken to the field where rigs and platforms were located. Most of them were either kept in offices to handle administrative papers, or some of them that were lucky were deployed to less technically challenging operations. By implication, Nigerian engineers were not given the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge they had acquired from the university. An engineer that is posted to work in an oil rig is given the opportunity to put his or her professional training into practice. In addition, working in the rig attracts extra financial benefits and allowances, which include: field allowance, off station allowance, hazard allowance, and many other allowances. So the dream of any Nigerian engineer is to be posted to the rig. Such a posting does not only give good pay but also exposes the engineer to the technical challenges of oil operations in the rig. One of the participants explains his experience:

I am an Engineer and a university graduate. After my NYSC, I was employed by a foreign oil servicing company based here in Rivers state. All graduate engineers in the company were expatriates who came from Europe to work for a short while and go back. I was the only Nigerian graduate engineer. The other Nigerians were mainly technical engineers. I was not given the opportunity to work on the rig. Some of the Nigerian technicians were deployed to the rig when the need arises. My salary then was N100,000 per month. My expatriate counterparts who perform the same job with me were paid in dollars to the equivalent of over N1 million per month. I tried to officially find out why I was discriminated against. I received no official response. I had no other alternative but to resign my appointment. I eventually joined a militant group to fight for justice. What I am saying is that the structure of the Nigerian oil industry is not only skewed against host communities, but also against local Nigerian staff employed in oil companies.

Given that there are now local or indigenous Nigerian oil Companies, the researcher attempted to find out whether local oil companies still have preference for foreign engineers and technicians. Participants' responses were unanimous. They opined that both Nigerian and foreign oil companies still depend on expatriates as the most reliable and trusted experts. Participants however provided a caveat by stating that this is because foreign oil companies have dominated the Nigerian oil and gas industry for over 50 years. This dominance means

that any newcomer must learn the operational ropes from the old. Newly established local oil companies have no option but to adopt the same management policies of importing expert engineers from Europe and North America. A participant shared his experience thus:

I work with a foreign oil company. I was deployed to assist to fix some technical problems for a newly established Nigerian oil servicing company. This company has a gas plan; it has given them some problems and it needed an urgent technical service. The expatriates brought from Europe to do the job did could not succeed in fixing the problem. When I got to the gate of the company, I was not properly received because the expert was expected to be a European. A call was put across to my company to complain that the foreign expert was yet to arrive. My manager had to talk at length to convince them that I was indeed the expert sent to do the job. My manager convinced them that I was the only person that could be relied upon to fix the problem. This is the problem we local engineers face in Nigeria. Our people do not seem to have confidence in our engineers. This is the mentality that has been built into our psyche and mentality by long years of European dominance of the oil sector. Nigerian bourgeoisie are not nationalistic in their reasoning. They would not encourage the development of local technical knowledge. In the absence of national values, corruption comes in. This explains why the so-called 'foreign experts' are having a field day in Nigeria.

Participants unanimously provided a chorus of analysis on how Nigerian engineers have always had very little control of oil and gas platforms and facilities. They argue that prior to the intensification of militant activities, violence and kidnapping of expatriate oil workers, a good number of Nigerians working with oil companies were merely saddled with day-to-day administrative duties. Expatriate staff, engineers and technicians are paid in hard currency. Those of them who work in off-shore drilling operations are paid extra bonuses. Their Nigerian colleagues are paid low wages. This means that expatriates generally earn far above their Nigerian counterparts. A participant explains that before the advent of militancy, his friend who is also an engineer was kept and abandoned to the office for many years. But with the surge in militant activities, he was deployed off-shore because expatriate engineers became scared to go to work.

This participant argue that "militancy brought good pay" to his friend; and that "besides the monetary gains, our local engineers are now properly exposed to the practical techniques and challenges of off-shore crude oil drilling, because some of them are now dispatched to Europe on crash (training) programmes that prepare them to take over from a rapidly declining number of expatriate engineers who can no longer come to the Niger Delta because of militant activities". This participant was emphatic thus: "I can tell you without any iota of

contradiction that militancy in the Niger Delta has created job opportunities for our youth. It has also opened up the doors for local Nigerian Engineers in foreign oil companies to advance rapidly in their chosen profession in the Nigerian petro-chemical and gas industry”.

What we can deduce from the foregoing narrative by our research participants is that oil insurgency has ensured that training on specialised petro-chemical and other engineering courses in prestigious European institutions, which used to be a preserve of expatriate oil workers from Europe and North America, is now being extended to Nigerians. Militancy has also forced some oil companies to change their employment policies. For instance, because of incessant kidnapping of foreign oil workers and huge ransoms usually demanded by militant groups, some foreign oil companies now employ Nigerians in jobs that were initially meant for expatriate workers. Thanks to militancy some of our Nigerian oil workers are now enjoying specialised training programs abroad. Initially, oil companies were only scared of using their fellow expatriates in oil extractive locations and platforms that are onshore. Expatriate oil workers were employed and deployed to offshore locations on the Atlantic Ocean far removed from the operational areas of militants.

Prior to the intensification of militant activities, all strategic operational positions, managers and chief engineers in major oil companies were recruited from Europe and North America. In most cases some specialists and consultants were flown into Nigeria to work for just few weeks and flown back. These foreign specialists and consultants were paid handsomely in hard currency and flown back. But with frequent attacks of offshore locations, all oil platforms are highly unsafe. A June 2008, GMA NEWS TV report collaborates thus:

Speedboat-borne militants raided an offshore oil installation nearly 100 miles from Nigeria's southern coastline on Thursday, forcing Royal Dutch Shell to slash production and exposing Africa's biggest oil industry as vulnerable even on the high seas. The attack by fighters of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, or MEND, about 85 miles into the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea was the militant group's furthest-ever attack in the open ocean. "The location for today's attack was deliberately chosen to remove any notion that offshore oil exploration is far from our reach," the group said in a statement. "The oil companies and their collaborators do not have any place to hide in conducting their nefarious activities" <sup>84</sup>.

A June 19, 2008 report by the Associated Press (AP) quoted in GMA NEWS TV also acknowledged that the campaign of bombings of pipelines and attacks on export facilities

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<sup>84</sup>See “GMA NEWS TV, “Militants attack Nigerian oil rig; production cut”, Article posted June 19, 2008, accessed on: 23/06/2010, at: <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/102194/Militants-attack-Nigerian-oil-rig-production-cut#>

which began in 2006, led to a drastic reduction Nigeria's daily oil output by about 20 percent. These attacks send global oil prices to all-time highs. GMA NEWS TV also reports that “gunmen riding in several open-hulled boats” attacked a deep-water installation, which led to a shutdown of about 200,000 barrels per day in production from the Bonga oil field<sup>85</sup>. The militants made it very clear that “they had aimed to destroy the oil installation's computer room but refrained at the last moment because it could have meant the needless death of the rig's staffers”<sup>86</sup>. The oil industry officials were surprised that the militants had even boarded the off-shore structure because “Nigeria's oil industry, which is Africa's biggest, has eyed offshore development as a safer alternative to operations in the watery southern Niger Delta, where militants normally operate”<sup>87</sup>.

While militants sometimes venture out of the delta's creeks and swamps, no attack had been recorded as far out as Thursday's raid. The militants said they would target oil and gas tankers in the area next, and said the oil companies should pull their foreign staff out of Nigeria till the long-simmering conflict in southern Nigeria is resolved. The United States, which is a top customer of Nigeria's easily refined crude, has offered to help Nigeria calm its waters and has sent naval vessels on training missions to the Gulf of Guinea, which is Africa's offshore oil heartland<sup>88</sup>. Participants submit that given the challenge of insecurity for expatriates emanating from the foregoing attacks, Nigerians are now receiving specialist training as chief engineers and technical managers. Others are trained as gas engineers. So the militancy has open up job opportunities for Nigerians at the high echelon of foreign oil companies in Nigeria. This is what one of our research participants considers as “the economic benefits of militancy”.

An interesting dimension in the debate over the “economic benefit of militancy” in the Niger Delta is the alleged collaboration of state officials in sharing the booty. For instance, while returning home from the June 19, 2008 offshore attacks by MEND, militants also injured two seamen, and seized and kidnapped an American worker from a supply vessel they came across on the Atlantic coast. The militants hurriedly freed the man “because corrupt government officials had tried to profit from ransom negotiations”<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid

<sup>86</sup>Ibid

<sup>87</sup>Ibid

<sup>88</sup>Ibid

<sup>89</sup>Ibid

#### **8.4 CONCLUSION:**

This chapter engages participants' opinions on the relationship between sexual liaisons, 'fatherless' children and the deepening crisis of civic instability in the Niger Delta. It can be concluded that sexual liaisons contribute to the state of insecurity in the Nigeria. Solutions cannot be found to insecurity in the region unless the factors contributing to the phenomenon of sexual liaisons are tackled head-on.

## **CHAPTER 9: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

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### **9 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

This study set out to investigate the intersection of oil enclave economy and the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and oil expatriate workers in the Niger Delta. The study explores sexual liaisons as fallout from the social and economic impact of oil. It argues that, like other social impacts of oil, the phenomenon of sexual liaisons has a direct relationship to the dynamics of oil enclavity in the Niger Delta. The recommendations contained in this chapter are centred on the need to intervene and bring about sustainable economic and social development of the communities in the Niger Delta.

Findings from the study suggest that there are direct and multiple links between the oil enclave economy of the Niger Delta, the distortions of the survival safety net of the subsistence economy of the local population, and the tendency for local women to take to sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers as a survival strategy. The study also reveals that expatriate oil workers are relatively high income earners compared to the subsistence status of local women. The power and income differentials in favour of expatriate workers that emanate from the oil economy create social inequality that places local women at a disadvantage. The study established that despite these obvious links between the oil enclavity and the phenomenon of sexual liaisons, the problem has not been accorded adequate scholarly attention. Previous exposition on the social dimension of oil enclave economy of the Nigerian Niger Delta has paid little attention to the phenomenon of sexual liaisons. Yet, women constitute about 50 percent of the population of the Niger Delta region. It is on this basis that the study tried to stimulate scholarly debate on 'oil enclave economy-sexual liaison nexus' to fill this omission.

In order to understand the social and economic basis of this nexus, the study sought theoretical explanation from the *enclave economy paradigm*. In chapters two and five, I review the enclave economic paradigm and the extent to which mineral enclaves are prone to distort subsistence economies that are on their pathway. Second, the study explains how the enclave structure of Nigeria's oil economy distorts the local subsistence baseline, which in

turn has forced OBCs to adapt unconventional means of survival. Despite the fact that Nigeria's oil sector contributes more than 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign revenue earnings, the enclave position of the Nigerian oil mineral sector is engulfed in extreme inefficiencies and deficiencies because it serves external interests to the neglect of internal aggregate demand. This is responsible for the inability of oil revenues to stimulate the subsistence economy of the Niger Delta, to contribute to economic growth, to resolve economic inefficiencies or to lead to development.

The study found that poverty and income disparity are the major factors that explain why women adapt sexual liaisons as survival alternatives. The study provides an outline of the social profile of women who engage in sexual liaisons. The study also identifies some of the social and cultural impacts of the phenomenon of sexual liaisons. One of the social impacts of sexual liaisons is the phenomenon of abandoned 'fatherless' children. The study found that some of these children are rejected by society and in some cases by their own mothers because they cannot cater for them. In frustration, some of them grow to repeat the life cycle of their mothers by engaging in sexual liaison with oil expatriate workers. Others, particular the males, engage in drugs and street culture. Yet others become the recruitment channels or 'reserve army' of militant groups. Sexual liaisons therefore contribute to the vicious cycle of civil instability and violence in the Niger Delta.

A second set of impacts has to do directly with the social and economic challenges that women involved in sexual liaisons are confronted with. The third is the impact of sexual liaisons on the sociocultural cohesion of community. The study found that the phenomenon of 'fatherless' children is one of the significant impacts of sexual liaisons on community cohesion. Given that the family is still the strongest legitimate source of child rearing in Nigeria, and that a child traces most of his or her property inheritance rights to the father, children fathered by absentee expatriates are confronted with serious legitimacy problems. First of all, a child in Nigeria is expected to be known by her/his father's name. This social requirement is denied to 'fatherless' children. So such children may live their lives without knowing anything about fatherhood. The study found that some of them are also denied the use of their maternal surname. The study also found that in a few cases, when a mother remarries a Nigerian husband, the 'fatherless' child is also denied the use of her/his step-father's surname. Such circumstances contribute to driving these youths into militant activities.



## **9.1 RESOLVING OIL ENCLAVITY AND ENHANCING THE SURVIVAL CAPACITY OF SUBSISTENCE:**

The starting point to address the problem of sexual liaisons should first begin with recognition that this is a serious social outcome of the oil extractive activities in the Niger Delta. And that the immediate general cause is income disparity between expatriate oil (male) workers and local women who survive on the distorted subsistence economy in the Niger Delta. This outcome has been institutionalised and has continued to prompt both social and economic problems for OBCs. In this context, two alternative solutions arise. First is to address or restructure the enclave structure of the Nigerian oil economy in such a way that revenue generated by oil is channelled to boost the subsistence economy. Second is to put in place comprehensive economic empowerment interventions that, as a key starting point to curb the prevalence of sexual liaisons, would help women to counterbalance the income disparity. Such interventions should, however, be combined with other actions which encourage oil companies to develop specialised projects that target and focus on local women in the Niger Delta.

There is a need for a clear vision of the desired and possible structural transformations required to reinvigorate the subsistence or non-formal sector of the OBCs. This could of course include pro-active measures to be undertaken by the Nigerian state. The only way to avoid enclave constraints on subsistence economies is to stimulate, transform and integrate the non-formal economies. What is needed is a paradigm shift away “from perspectives that rely solely on market constraints and distortions...using the enclave model approach” (Mhone: 2001:33). This is because “the market on its own may not be able to precipitate the necessary structural changes required to enhance labour absorption, hence the need for pro-active measures by the state, even if within a market context that respects stabilization conditionalities to some degree” (Mhone: 2001:33).

This study illustrates the nature of enclavity in the Nigerian oil economy by discussing the specific manner in which it has evolved over the years. This explains why women in the Niger Delta region are prone to engage in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers. The study found that subsistence economies have often been distorted by mineral extractive enclaves, thereby rendering the majority of the local population unemployed or under-employed. The study also found that in most cases, such indigenous populations are often forced by their social and economic challenges to adopt unconventional alternative means of survival. The study notes that the problem of low employment absorptive capacity in the

Niger Delta has a direct relationship with the distortion of subsistence economy and the structural exclusion and marginalisation of the majority of OBC members who are unable to engage in productive activities within the oil economic system. These factors are all rooted in the enclave legacy of the oil sector. The findings in this study concur with Clark's report which states that:

The diminished productivity and viability of local economies due to the environmental and social degradation caused by oil exploitation has affected the lives of women in unique ways. ...the rights of women have been violated by the oil companies. Several women told the delegation that they are no longer able to provide food for their families by performing their traditional roles. They explained that women used to sustain their families through farming, and trading in agricultural and other goods. But each of these is now extremely difficult with the effects of oil industry pollution....since farms are failing, palm trees are not bearing fruit, and fish are depleted, women are not only unable to feed their families, but cannot earn enough money to send their children to school, or to afford medical treatment. Women are now redundant...

(Clark, et al.: 1999:10)

The findings in this study also concurred with Mhone's (2001:36) enclave economy paradigm which perceives the continued existence of the problem to be "partly as a consequence of the uncritical acceptance of the enclave formal sector as the engine of growth", and partly because of the misplaced belief that the community development strategies embarked upon by oil TNCs, especially Shell, would have trickle down effects, in which growth in the oil sector would eventually absorb the majority of the population of OBCs into the labour force and other productive activities.

Since the 1990s, neither privatisation of the oil sector nor neoliberal 'market forces' have been able to resolve the enclavity of the Nigerian oil sector. This situation is exacerbated by government policies that have continued to reinforce the oil sector against the non-formal or subsistence sector, which sustains the lives of many people in both rural and urban areas in the Niger Delta. The adoption of economic reforms of privatisation in the oil sector will continue to strengthen its enclavity, but not result in an absolute reduction in the numbers of unemployed and under-employed in the Niger Delta. If anything, such policies have combined with corrupt practices to continue to consolidate the structural enclavity of Nigeria's oil sector. As the enclave structure is consolidated, so also is the misery and poverty of OBCs consolidated. In a related study, Adalikwu (2007:213–214) succinctly captures the prevailing situation thus:

Nigerian state policies do not favour or protect the household economy of the general Nigerian public. Instead, with the adoption of SAPs, private export activities particularly in crude oil are favoured at the expense of food production. State policies do not protect the masses but favour MNCs' environmental practices that do not protect the people against oil spillages, pipe blowouts, and pollution of the environment. The oil MNCs are free to use very old oil pipes, which criss-cross people's homes and farmlands, pollute the air, water, and land with toxic gas flares, and site oil wells near people's homes as shown in picture twelve and picture thirteen. Nonetheless, the Nigerian government does not have any control over these practices, nor does it have control over the terms of trade or have the financial and technological means like the oil conglomerates to invest in the sector.

The study concludes that pro-active measures by the Nigerian state are needed to restructure the oil sector and make it more inclusive of the majority of the population of OBCs. This is because, according to Adaliku (2007:227), Nigerian state petroleum policies and laws "have not adequately protected local citizens but have favoured oil MNCs' environmental practices that pollute the environment and negatively impact on people whose main source of livelihood is their land". She also observes that "overall, oil exploration and extraction has not benefited the indigenes of areas where they take place but has instead impoverished them further by destroying their land, which is a major source of production for livelihood".

The alternative is therefore to embrace policies that consciously support and rejuvenate the subsistence economic system as a way to generate a broad and dynamic long term impact on the economy and society in the Niger Delta. This can be accomplished through a number of state interventions to broaden the asset and income entitlements of the majority of OBCs. The central argument is that policies should be formulated in a manner that are biased toward those subsistence activities that would help absorb more people into income generation and assert job-creation through self employment. There is a need to rejuvenate public sector development.

In the words of Mhone (2001:36), there is the need for paradigm shift "away from the trickle down assumptions of current conventional economic policy regimes to one informed by the structural limits of the enclave model of growth and one guided by the need to pro-actively restructure this legacy in order to launch a basis for more inclusive development" (Mhone (2001:36).

Adesina (2010:2) also provides reasons why Sub-Saharan enclave economies need to rejuvenate the public sector thus:

For many developing countries the challenge is also at an institutional level, and we see these more acutely in Sub-Saharan Africa. Successive cycles of neoliberal reforms have left many countries in a state of acute institutional crisis and undermined the little capacity for endogenous policy learning that many of these countries built in the period between 1960 and 1980. For many of our societies, the consequence of obsessive anti-statism was to fundamentally damage the nation-building project. The institutions and policy instruments for building social cohesion were severely undermined in the process of 'reform'. Often, for the poorest countries there are no substitutes for the collective, public provisioning of these services. In the sub-Saharan African context people did not simply fall through the cracks; they died.

The first step is to progressively provide the necessary policy stimuli to the subsistence or non formal sectors of the Niger Delta economy. This can be done by re-invigorating intensive activities that used to characterise the Nigerian public sector before the introduction of Structural Adjustment and neo-liberal policies of privatisation and subsidy removals that began from the late 1980s through the 1990s. This can be done through small scale rural and urban activities that are part of processes that would not only provide means of survival but help with surplus income generation amongst OBCs, especially those that are in rural areas. Asset entitlement strategies can be developed through the comprehensive promotion of small scale agricultural activities and the provision of credit facilities for small scale industries in both rural and urban areas of the Niger Delta region.

We must avoid the interventionist mistakes of the past, made as both government palliatives and community development efforts of oil TNCs which were petty-survivalist in nature and could not address the fundamental problems of oil enclavity. The new strategy should encourage profit-making and surplus generation within subsistence economies. Previous interventions failed because the subsistence sector of the economy was not consciously supported by policy but merely perceived as a survivalist economy that does not need bail-outs. Mhone (2001:33) argues that "the promotion of exchange and asset entitlements along the lines indicated has the effect of commoditising social and economic relations in the non-formal sectors, thereby capturing the non-formal sector labour force under the rubric of market imperatives. Such a process cannot be gradual and without its tumultuous consequences since it entails a process of class formation and differentiation, but is nonetheless a necessary step".

To transform enclave economies like Nigeria, there are several lessons to be learnt from the '*late industrial revolution*' of the so called '*East Asian miracle*' (Amsden, 1989; Li, 1988). This is a fact that African enclave economies have often ignored. Without natural

resource bases, East Asian countries were able to transform their countries through an initial process of agrarian reform by changing the nature of asset and exchange entitlements in this sector. The agrarian sector was also linked to the industrial sector thereby precipitating a process of primary accumulation at the agrarian sector which is equivalent of our subsistence economy in Nigeria. Britain, as the first country to experience industrial revolution in Europe, was galvanised by almost a similar effect. For the East Asian countries, this was undertaken decades ago in the early years of what is today known as *late industrial revolution*. There is no country that best personifies the principle of *late industrial revolution* like Japan, which was accomplished through the Meiji restoration (Cumings: 1984:8, Johnson: 1982, Smith: 1955).

The issue of the transformation of enclave economies which Mhone relates is that, given the years over which the Nigerian oil sector has apparently been unable to alleviate poverty, how can the foregoing suggestions be successfully implemented? The answer can be found in whether general environmental conditions can be created in the Niger Delta to stimulate its local economy and society. The history of industrial development has shown that 'environmental conditions' can be sought mainly in noneconomic aspects of the society. In the words of Hoselitz (1957:29), "apart from the build-up of economic overhead capital, such as a communications and transport system and investment in harbor facilities, some warehouses, and similar installations favouring especially foreign trade, most of the innovations introduced during the preparatory period are based upon changes in the institutional arrangements in the legal, educational, familial, or motivational orders". And "once these new institutions have been created, they operate as "gifts from the past," contributing freely to the vigorous spurt of economic activity" for take-off.

In his contribution to the book: *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*", Landes (2000:2-4) shows that the industrial success of Japan and other East Asian countries were functions of several factors, but prominent amongst them were cultural values, because *Culture Makes all the Difference*. This is more so because, most important for transformation and development to take place, existing intuitions and the value system must also adapt to new ends. In the case of East Asia, the phase of industrial revolution was characterised by a combination of communal values and capital formation. The "main functions of the preparatory stage for economic growth and development" were changes that took place in "the institutional order, especially in areas other than economic activity, which transform the society from one in which capital formation and the introduction of modern economic organization is difficult or impossible, to one in which the accumulation of capital and the

introduction of new production processes appear as 'natural' concomitants of general social progress" (Hoselitz: 1957:29). Mhone explains why African economies have not been able to follow the Asian example thus:

This process has the effect of placing a country on a trajectory of growth and development that embraces all parts of the labour force and that blurs the distinction between the formal and non-formal sectors by integrating them. This is the process that no African country has attempted to achieve as easily demonstrated by the manner in which the non-productive subsistence sector persists in being the major absorber of labour. To be sure bold attempts at economic restructuring along the above lines have been attempted with strong state intervention in Malawi, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire on the basis of a market orientation and in Tanzania, Ghana, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Algeria based on socialist strategies, but these were limited attempts that did not go far enough and that created more problems than they attempted to resolve.

(Mhone: 2001:34)

There is need to reprioritise recurrent and capital expenditures by the oil producing states of the Niger Delta so that they are directed toward the desired needs of the people. In particular, the all too ubiquitous non-productive expenditures by the Nigerian state palliatives need to be redirected toward productive activities along the suggested strategy. Nigeria can also learn from the success story of Botswana.

## **9.2 BOTSWANA: THE CASE OF AN ENCLAVE ECONOMIC SUCCESS:**

Given that Japan and Korea have succeeded in becoming world-class steel producers despite their virtual complete dependence on imports of iron ore (Sachs and Warner: 1997:3), can it then be concluded that natural resources are no longer a decisive advantage to economic growth? The answer is an absolute no, because natural resource endowment does not pose an actual disadvantage. If the Nigerian governments had limited corruption and put oil windfalls to good, the country would rarely face unrest in the Niger Delta. Unfortunately, oil production is now rising precisely in countries where political leadership is corrupt and majority of the population very poor, such as: the African countries of Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Namibia, and São Tomé and Príncipe; countries in the Caspian basin such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan; or the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, East Timor, Myanmar, and Vietnam; (Ross: 2008:3; Eifert: et al.: 2003).

It is within the foregoing context that this section reviews why Botswana succeeded. This section submits that Botswana's success story came from several factors: (1) its political authority stems from traditional sources; (2) the policies pursued since independence have

legitimised the regime; (3) its lack of a military during its first decade allowed resources to be devoted to public good provision and legitimised the regime (Beaulier and Subrick: 2006:104).

Botswana, which is one of the most resource-rich countries in the world, has experienced remarkable growth for several decades. Its abundance of diamonds seems to have contributed significantly to Botswana's strong economic growth. The average growth rate since the 1980s has been 7.8 percent, about 40 percent of which can be explained by mining, though recent economic diversification has slightly reduced that contribution .... However, it is commonly accepted that resource-abundant economies tend to grow less rapidly than resource-scarce economies.

(Iimi (2006:3)

This section interrogates whether and why Botswana has succeeded in transforming its diamond enclave wealth into growth and development while other similar cases in sub-Saharan Africa are still struggling but to no avail. In common sense parlance, abundant natural resources should promote growth, since resource richness can give a "big push" to the economy through more investment in economic infrastructure and more rapid human capital development. But in practice that is not the case. Iimi's (2006:1, 9–10) study has demonstrated that the success story of Botswana is largely driven by effective natural resource management and growth, particularly high quality regulation, and anticorruption policies, such as transparency and accountability in the public sector.

The performance of natural resource-rich nations in Europe and in the Middle East suggests that the paradox of plenty is more of a sub-Saharan African phenomenon than a general rule. Even within the context of Africa, there are exceptions to this African malaise. One such exception is Botswana, a leading exporter of diamonds, which – unlike most natural resource-rich countries in sub-Saharan Africa – has achieved an impressive economic growth and performance since independence. Over the last two decades, the economy of Botswana grew at about 7.8% on average, the highest growth rate across the whole sub-Saharan African region. Over 40% of this growth is driven by the mining sector, which provides up to 80% of total export earnings for the country (Fofack: 2009:1–2).

Botswana has continued to sustain a robust economic growth as the country experienced a virtuous circle of wealth accumulation over the years. But other natural mineral resource-rich African countries have, by contrast, only experienced excessive growth volatility exacerbated by economic and political instability (Fofack: 2009:2). Because she has not suffered from the problems associated with her fellow sub-Saharan countries, it is

important to explain this success story of an enclave economy. On the question of why and how Botswana adopted policies that engendered its remarkable growth record, whereas other similar enclave economies in Africa failed, Beaulier and Subrick (2006:104) argue that the answer “lies in the effectiveness and legitimacy of its political institutions”. In this section, we briefly explore the extent to which sources for the successful development of an enclave economy like Botswana are derived from legitimate and effective political institutions. Manifest in this section is a nationalistic value system of a political ruling elite committed to building their economy and society.

Right from political independence, Botswana did not succumb to the natural resource curse even though diamond revenues provide over 40 percent of her GDP (Iimi: 2006:3). She has continued to maintain low rates of inflation, at least when compared to sub-Saharan African standards. Despite its poor geographic location and endowments, Botswana has maintained economic growth for decades. She is one of the few African countries besides post-Apartheid South Africa to invest in public goods, such as primary and secondary education and paved roads, rather than invest in bogus projects, as done by Nigeria. For instance, since independence, the total length of paved roads in Botswana has increased from 50 to 60 km to 10,000 km (Beaulier and Subrick (2006:104).

There are unique circumstances that enabled Botswana to succeed. Botswana, rich in many natural resources including diamonds, has experienced stable economic growth for several decades. How has Botswana escaped the natural resource curse? By examining Botswana, one can begin to understand that the Nigerian oil enclave economy has been characterised with corruption, crisis, poverty, and failure. Botswana also epitomises possible preventative measures that other struggling enclave economies in Africa could adopt.

Beaulier and Subrick (2006:104) explain that the most important factor that galvanised Botswana to success despite the enclivity of her economy is increased legitimacy of her political institutions. They argued that “the source of authority cannot be the agent of authority; in other words, there must be a separation of power between the people who wield power and the institutional embodiment of political power”. This is because “if the agents of authority are also the sources of authority, then legitimacy lives and dies with them”. The persistent failure of Nigerian government palliatives (the subject matter of chapter five of this study), reparations which began with the inauguration of the Willink Commission in 1957, serves as a fundamental reminder of this. Beaulier and Subrick (2006:104) submit that “if the sources of legitimacy differ from the agents, then political transitions that do not threaten the stability of the political system can occur”. The success of Botswana is imbedded in the



foregoing political logic. Botswana's first President Seretse Khama and his party followed this logic, successfully making this transition by adopting policies that pursued the general welfare of the Botswanan people. Consequently, the policies built on Khama's legitimacy and provided the necessary impetus for the country's transition to a modern state (Beaulier and Subrick: 2006:104)

In 2002, Botswana exported \$2 billion dollars worth of diamonds, nickel, gold, and other natural resources<sup>90</sup>. Through good government policies, strong political leadership, and a sound long-term development plan, Botswana has seemingly avoided the effects of the resource curse, and provides quality public services such as education and healthcare to its citizens. Effective anti-corruption laws and high civil engagement has also forced representatives to be more transparent about how they are spending and distributing the country's natural resource wealth.

Drawing comparative instances between Botswana and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Dunning (2005:451–454) develops a theoretical game model to examine the choice between looting resource rents and investing them for growth. Botswana was in a fortunate position because of its arrangements with De Beers, the South African diamond mining company, which included a buffer stocks guarantee. Hence, revenue was atypically stable (Collier and Hoeffler: 2005:628). In addition, Debswana Diamond Company, the Botswanan branch of De Beers, is owned equally by De Beers and the government of Botswana, assuring stable revenue for the country. Debswana also invests in the community, building hospitals, schools, and recreational facilities for employees and local residents<sup>91</sup>. Because all aspects of the diamond trade, including mining, cutting and polishing, and manufacturing are managed by subsidiaries of Debswana, Botswana retains more of its diamond wealth than other nations that only export rough diamonds.

Since 1970, Botswana's per capita income has grown more than tenfold, from about \$425 to more than \$4,420 in 2006. However, in an equally endowed natural resource country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR), income levels declined in real terms because real per capita income dropped to \$91 in 2006 from over \$325 in 1970 (Fofack: 2009:2). There is a similar, abysmal story of a downward trend in the case of Nigeria. I am not in any way saying that the underlying impressive income growth in Botswana has automatically

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<sup>90</sup>See: "Analysing the natural resource curse", in News Hour Extra, accessed on: 02/02/2010, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/conflict\\_diamonds\\_natural\\_resource\\_curse.pdf](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/conflict_diamonds_natural_resource_curse.pdf)

<sup>91</sup>Ibid

translated into mass employment, or a western European type welfare regime and complete poverty eradication.

There is indeed relative poverty in Botswana. As we explain in chapter one in the case of the poverty profile of the Niger Delta, the persistence of poverty in the midst of an exceptional growth performance in Botswana can be explained in part by the capital-intensive nature of the extractive industries sector, which brings few forward and backward linkages, and thus few opportunities for employment. The issue is that while the mining sector accounts for over 40% of GDP in Botswana, it represents less than 5% of total employment (Fofack: 2009:2). Other intervening variables that may also explain the situation of Botswana have to do with that fact the country has poor scientific infrastructures and lacks the highly skilled human resources to process the raw diamonds into finish products for the international market. All these cumulatively further undermined employment opportunities in her mining sector of the economy.

Despite the foregoing, it should be admitted that, compared to Nigeria, the ordinary people of Botswana as a whole have enjoyed a steady improvement in welfare over the past decades. Notwithstanding the HIV/Aids pandemic that has afflicted the country, disciplined management of revenue from the mining sector has contributed to economic transformation for most of her people, in terms of household income growth and access to essential social services, including antiretroviral drugs for HIV/Aids patients. Moreover, the government of Botswana has established a Sustainable Budget Index under which mineral revenues are exclusively used to finance development and recurrent spending in the health and education sector.

In the case of the Niger Delta in Nigeria, the huge revenue from oil has led to a situation that has been described as “oil doom and HIV/AIDS boom” (Udonwa, et al.: 2004). Unlike in Botswana, where substantial revenues from the mining sector have been used to fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Udoh (et al.: 2008:670) argues that OBCs have not been so lucky. Yet, the socioeconomic impact of oil exploration which is highly associated with poverty is one of the “underlying factors driving HIV prevalence in the Niger Delta region” (Udoh, et al.: 2008:672). Calain’s (2008:3) study of four oil-rich African countries consisting of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, Angola, southern Chad and Southern Sudan, using the common denominator of oil exploitation, found that despite differences in social settings, history, and ongoing conflicts, oil has led to general fragmentation of health systems in these countries and regions.

The pertinent question that Nigeria must try to find answers to are thus: how has Botswana succeeded where most other countries have failed? First answer is her commitment to good governance and accountability, rooted in traditional institutions. Second is that the so called Botswana 'miracle' is a function of accountability, transparency and nationalistic posture of her national bourgeoisie. Botswana has consistently exhibited one of the highest rankings in the world transparency and corruption index. According to Fofack (2009:3-4) "Botswana's political elite has been frugal and accountable to the people", and "these attributes have enabled these leaders to withstand a culture of rampant greed that has done so much to undermine the development process in the rest of the continent". Fofack (2009:3-4) again sums it up thus: "When leadership fails, we end up with extremely wealthy elites surrounded by abject poverty. On the other hand, where there is a commitment to good leadership, natural resource endowment is conducive to economic growth and poverty reduction, regardless of the prevailing political system".

### **9.3 WOMEN SPECIFIC EMPOWERMENT IN AN ENCLAVE SETTING:**

The objective which this study sought to achieve was to examine the intersection between oil enclave economy and sexual liaisons. Chapters six, seven and eight present an outline of the social and economic impacts of sexual liaisons on women involved in the practice, on 'fatherless' children and on OBCs. Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended as measures that should be put in place to improve the situation in the Niger Delta region, particularly for women and children affected by sexual liaisons. With specific reference to women, we recommend the following:

There is a need for the Nigerian state to begin comprehensive collaboration with the communities, a need to set up a special agency to monitor how the activities of TNCs in their oil exploration and extraction activities affect local women in particular. In addition, the government regulatory agency will need to begin collaborate with local women groups to establish specific agencies run by local women to monitor the peculiar ways in which the activities of oil TNCs alter the normal way of life of women. .

Funds should deliberately be set up by oil TNCs to compensate victims of sexual liaisons. Measures should also be put in place to address the problems of women whose means of livelihood have been destroyed by the activities of oil exploration. Efforts should be made to avail such women of the basic means of livelihood, in terms of access to basic needs including food, health care facilities, water, housing, etc.

With specific reference to women, there is requirement for a strategic approach to public provision of qualitative and free education, and training to facilitate skills acquisition by women in the Niger Delta. Chapter five demonstrated that this is one dimension in which both the Nigerian government palliatives and community development projects by oil TNCs have consistently blundered since the 1960s. In the absence of a clear policy thrust and vision specifically targeted at the provision of education to women in the Niger Delta, all other strategies anchored on human resource development would tend to be incoherent and unrelated to the economic development and upliftment of women's living conditions in the Niger Delta in particular and Nigerian women in general. Adesina (2010:2) again laments the situation thus:

Ten years of severe retrenchment of public education has produced not just a lost decade of books in libraries and chinks in classrooms; it subverted the culture of scholarship and destroyed (in several cases) the conveyor belt of intergenerational transmission of knowledge, essential to scholarship, when those able to do so emigrated. Reversing the trend is turning out to be much more complicated than simply finding new money to finance education.

As most the victimised and previously marginalised group in the Niger Delta, a broad based economic comprehensive empowerment programme should be put in place for women. It is generally argued that access to income through micro-credit schemes is an important source of empowerment for women because "it allows them a greater say in household decisions, increased income, status and changing roles" (Karubi: 2006:257). Given that micro-credit (finance) promotes a wider context and strategy for women's economic and sociopolitical empowerment, we recommend that measures be put in place to enable women in the Niger Delta to have access to micro-credit support. Such schemes have the potential to enhance women's capacity to participate in economic activities, to generate income and in some situation surpluses, and by extension, to emerge with "mini-capitalist characteristics" (Karubi: 2006:258). This recommendation is more relevant in the case of women involved in sexual liaisons because it will give the economic strength to overcome their present circumstance of perceiving expatriate workers as an alternative resource.

Even while this study believes that the implementation of comprehensive and transparent micro-credit schemes can and does provide a context within which a process of women's empowerment is possible, Karubi (2006:258) warn that improper implementation of such schemes is equally possible and can provide "a context in which both market and rural women can be disempowered". Other issues have to do with the marginalisation of women

by micro-credit institutions because of issues of collateral. Yet women's empowerment through such schemes helps to develop fully financially self-sufficiency of women if implemented in a transparent manner

This study therefore recommends a strategic focus on women empowerment through micro credit as a means to curb the phenomenon of sexual liaisons. Although women's empowerment cannot be described as "a one dimensional progression in which A is equal to B or vice versa" (Karubi: 2006:258), there cannot be what she describes as "a monolithic empowerment paradigm", but "a pluralism that captures the fluidity and dynamism of the concept and the different ways in which women perceive it".

The objective is to ensure that women's living conditions are improved to an extent to which they become successful entrepreneurs and generate surplus income within a subsistence economy. Therefore, it is vital to point out that micro-credit schemes should influence women's ability to earn an income, which should also initiate a series of 'virtuous spirals' of economic empowerment and improve women's well-being their families. Women's empowerment will also have spiral implications for children's well-being. Just as the development process is not itself a fixation, successful empowerment is a continuum rather than an explicit process. Thus, empowerment should be mindful of sociostructural and contextual constraints if it is to be a success.

There is need to ensure that palliatives and community development programmes promote strategies that have direct impact on absorbing women in sustainable self employing small scale enterprises in both rural and urban areas.

The resolution of structural distortions of subsistence survival nests of OBCs should be done by promoting public works programmes that open up employment opportunities and absorb segments of the unemployed and under-employed in the Niger Delta so as to enhance asset acquisition and human capital development.

There should be re-orientation of Nigeria's policy thrust by neutralising existing biases against subsistence or non-formal economic sectors in such a way that the process integrates and transforms the subsistence sector. This was the case with Japan and the East Asian experience. In this case, particular income generation activities or outcomes of women (not survivalist activities like soap making etc.) should be identified, targeted, promoted and financed or subsidized with public funds.

Clark (et al.: 1999:10) had reported how bleak the existing situation is thus:

Everywhere we visited we witnessed the destruction of the local environment, and the oppression of communities affected by what can accurately be described as an outlaw oil industry. Under the somber shadow of this industry of wealth, millions of Niger Delta residents try to survive. The tragedy of so much oil being extracted from the same lands where abject poverty has become institutionalized is unbearable. Over the last 40 years, billions of dollars in profits are earned each year, as millions of barrels of oil are extracted. Meanwhile, high unemployment, failing crops, declining wild fisheries, poisoned waters, dying forests and vanishing wildlife are draining the very life blood of the region. Even the rainwater is acidic and poisoned. What else can the oil companies take from the people? And, what should they be required to give back? It is a sad reality that Nigeria's oil helps fuel the industrialized world in its mad rush for "progress," while the producing nation is left so obviously far behind.

Community development in OBCs should be real, not cosmetic. The projects should be determined by each community through a process of genuine dialogue. In addition, members of local communities should also be hired and trained for jobs at every level. The integrity of life in the Niger Delta must and should be respected at all times. This can be done by ensuring that oil TNCs carry out the exploration activities without threatening the subsistence economy of local people. Transparency is very important. As such, oil TNCs must operate in a way to ensure that independent monitoring of their activities is possible. This could be done by opening their books for stakeholders' inspections.

#### **9.4 ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

As a study of intersection of oil enclavity and sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers, the present study is very limited in terms of scope, sample size and focus as opposed to general social impacts of oil enclavity on the entire Niger Delta economy and society. By way of ending this study, future research should expand on the above limitations. There is the need for future research to focus on other dimensions of the social effects of sexual liaisons such as 'fatherless' children. Such research should attempt to interrogate in a relatively larger scale the whole dynamics of 'fatherlessness' in the Niger Delta. Particular focus should be on the relationship between fatherlessness and militancy in the Niger Delta. It is important to recall that during our introductory interaction sessions on 28 January 2008 with women and 'fatherless' children in *Aka base* and *Gambia* respectively, the main researcher was repeatedly asked one question: "If you are from an NGO, what help can you render to us and our suffering 'fatherless' children?"

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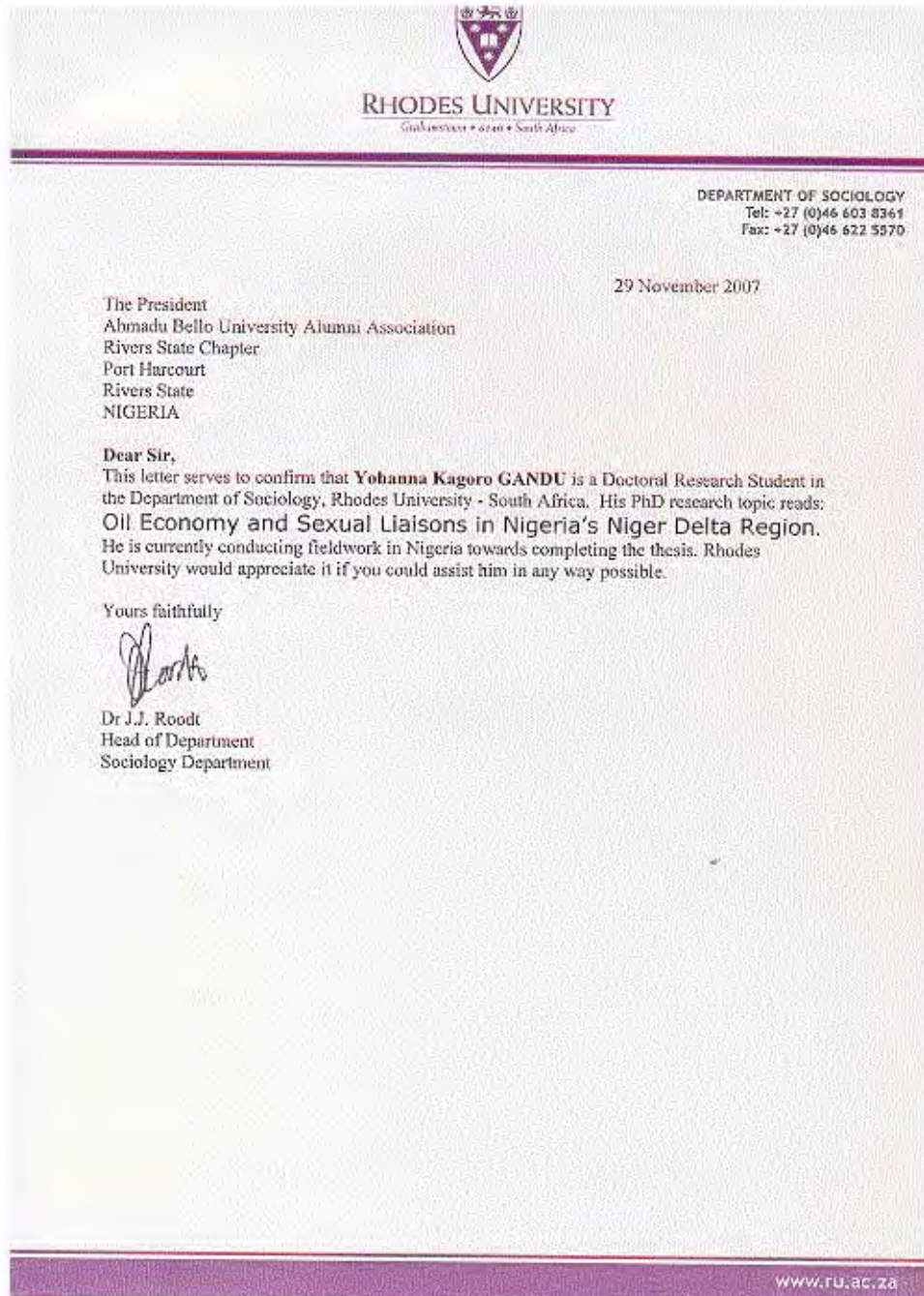
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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX: 1



APPENDIX: 2



**APPENDIX: 3**

**In-Depth Interview Guide used for Women involved in Sexual Liaisons**

1. What is your level of education?
2. Please give a brief life history about your self?
3. Why did you embark on sexual liaisons with oil expatriate workers?
4. Are there other reasons that pushed you into sexual liaisons with oil expatriate workers?
5. How did you come about knowing your expatriate sexual liaison partner or partners?
6. What do you think is the average age of women involved in sexual liaisons?
7. Are married women also involved sexual liaisons with oil expatriate workers?
8. If yes, please explain why?
9. What has been the reaction of your family and community to your involvement in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers?
10. Would you consider sexual liaison as an alternative means of making a living and why?
11. Please explain your answer to this question.
12. Please give an outline of what you think is the impact of sexual liaisons on your society, community or family.
13. How many expatriate oil workers have you had sexual liaisons with?
14. Did you have children from such sexual liaisons?
15. Is your expatriate partner still with you?
16. If no, please explain why?
17. What is your opinion on why your expatriate partner abandoned you?
18. If you ever had the opportunity to see him, what will you tell him?
19. If you have remarried a Nigerian, is or are your child/children from the previous relationship living with your new husband?
20. If not, please explain.
21. What is the nature of relationship between your new husband and the child/children you had from your previous sexual liaison partner (s)
22. What has been the reaction of your family to your involvement in sexual liaisons?
23. What has been the reaction of your community to your involvement in sexual liaisons?
24. What has been the reaction of your church to your involvement in sexual liaisons?
25. Could you please give an outline of the economic benefits you derive from sexual liaisons?
26. What are the negative effects of sexual liaisons on you as an individual?

27. What negative effects have others like you suffered as a result from being involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil worker(s)?
28. What are the negative effects of sexual liaisons on 'fatherless' children?
29. What are the negative effects of sexual liaisons on your family?
30. What are the negative effects of sexual liaisons on your immediate community?
31. Do you think there is a link between sexual liaisons and an increase in militant activities in the Niger Delta region?
32. If yes, please give an outline of the linkages?
33. What measures do you think should be put in place to help women victims of sexual liaisons and their 'fatherless' children?
34. What measures do you think should be taken to help 'fatherless' children?
35. Have you suffered any form of loss of self esteem because of your involvement in sexual liaisons?
36. Has there been an occasion in which you suffered ill-treatment at the hands of your expatriate sexual partner(s)?



**APPENDIX: 4**

**In-depth Interview Guide used for Community leaders and youths:**

1. What is your opinion on the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and oil expatriate workers in the Niger Delta?
2. What do you think is the root cause of sexual liaisons between local women and oil expatriate workers?
3. What problems has the phenomenon of sexual liaisons generated in your community?
4. Could you please give an outline of the positive benefits that women or girls in the Niger Delta derive from sexual liaisons?
5. What do you consider to be the negative effects of sexual liaisons on individual women or girls involved in the practice?
6. Could you please give an outline of the negative effects of sexual liaisons on women and girls involved in the practice?
7. Could you please give an outline of the negative effects of sexual liaisons on 'fatherless' children fathered in the process?
8. What is the material condition of these children?
9. Do they usually complain?
10. Can you please give us an outline of the issues they always complain about?
11. Please give an outline of the negative effects of sexual liaisons on the family system and institutions.
12. Could you please give an outline of the negative effects of sexual liaisons on your community at large.
13. What are the Human Development Effects of sexual liaisons on the Niger Delta as a region?
14. Do you think there is a correlation between the phenomenon of sexual liaisons and militancy in the Niger Delta?
15. If yes, could you please give an outline of the nature of that relationship?
16. What specific measure has your community put in place to alleviate the challenges of sexual liaisons?
17. What specific measures has the Nigerian federal government put in place to alleviate the challenges of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta?
18. What are the efforts being made by your community to solve some of the problems associated with sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta?

**APPENDIX: 5**

**In-Depth Interview Guide used for 'Fatherless' Children**

1. Please give a brief life history of yourself.
2. Please give a brief outline of the problems you have had in the past and present.
3. Are you living with your biological mother?
4. If not, could you please explain why?
5. Do you have a relationship with your biological father?
6. If yes, what is the nature of the relationship you have with your biological father?
7. What is the nature of the relationship you have with your mother's family members?
8. If your mother re-married, what is the nature of relationship you have with your step father?
9. What is the nature of relationship you have with your step father's family members?
10. What nature of relationship do you have with the family of your mother?
11. What nature of relationship do you have with your immediate community?
12. What family name do you use and why?
13. What really do you think is in a family name?
14. What is your opinion on the concept of 'fatherless' children?
15. What is your opinion on the general treatment of 'fatherless' children by family members and the community in general?
16. Please give an outline of the things you have lost because of the absence of your biological father?
17. What other things do you think you have lost because of his absence?
18. What do you feel that you don't know about your biological father?
19. Have you complained to anybody?
20. If yes, who did you complain to?
21. Could you please give an outline of issues in your complaints?
22. Did the person do anything?
23. If yes, what was done?

**APPENDIX: 6**

**FGD Interview guide used for community leaders and youths:**

1. Has your community had cases of local women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers?
2. If yes, what in your opinion are the factors responsible for the phenomenon of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers?
3. What do you think women benefit from sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers?
4. Give an outline of other benefits that women derived from sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers.
5. Please give an outline of problems that women involved in sexual liaisons encounter in your community.
6. Give an outline of the other negative effects of sexual liaisons on women involved in the practice.
7. Please give an outline of the characteristics of women involved in sexual liaisons.
8. Give an outline of the impacts of the practice of sexual liaison on the family system in your community.
9. Give an outline of the other impacts of the practice of sexual liaison on oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta as a region.
10. In what unique or specific ways do you think women involved in sexual liaisons with expatriate oil workers suffer in your community?
11. Have you had cases of 'fatherless' children, fathered as result of sexual liaisons between local women and expatriate oil workers in your community?
12. If yes, in what circumstances are children regarded as 'fatherless' in your community?
13. Why does your community regard such children as 'fatherless'?
14. Explain why your community still regards a child to be 'fatherless' whereas she/he was biologically fathered as are all human beings?
15. How does the phenomenon of sexual liaisons relate to everyday common sense discussions of the concept of fatherlessness in your community?
16. How does your immediate community relate and treat such 'fatherless' children?
17. As a member of your community, what do you think is in a family name?
18. What has been the reaction of your community and society to 'fatherless' children?
19. What specific problems do 'fatherless' children in your community have?
20. Do you know a specific 'fatherless' child or children that have encountered such problems?

21. If yes, please give an outline of the problems encountered by such children?
22. Do you think there is any relationship between sexual liaisons and youth resistance, conflict and violence and kidnapping of oil expatriate workers in the Niger Delta?
23. If yes, please give an outline of the nature of that relationship.
24. Are there ways in which your communities try to re-habilitate these children?
25. Has there been any conscious attempt to rehabilitate these children and their mothers by immediate family members or communities?
26. Are there ways in which communities try to erase the concept and culture of stigmatization children born out of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta as 'fatherless'?
27. Are these children completely rejected?
28. Please explain.
29. What are the implications of being regarded a 'fatherless' child or a 'bastard' child?
30. What is the relationship between the phenomenon of transactional sexual liaisons and the general atmosphere of civil instability in the Niger Delta region?
31. What do you think is the solution to the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger?
32. What are the Human Development Implications of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria?
33. What have been the implications of sexual liaisons on the culture and society in your community?

**APPENDIX: 7**

**FGD Interview Guide used for Church elders and youth leaders:**

1. Who do you blame for the phenomenon of sexual liaisons in the Niger Delta and why?
2. Do you think oil companies should share the blame?
3. Please explain your answers.
4. What have oil companies done in your community to alleviate the problem of sexual liaisons in your community?
5. How effective and sustainable are those efforts?
6. Is there healing and coping therapies that your church gives to women victims of sexual liaisons?
7. If yes, please give an outline of those therapies.
8. Is there a healing and coping therapy that your church gives to 'fatherless' children who are victims of sexual liaisons?
9. If yes, please give an outline of those therapies.
10. What is your opinion on the concept of 'fatherless' children?
11. How do you perceive the problem of sexual liaisons?
12. Have any case or problem related to sexual liaison been reported to your church?
13. If yes, what was the nature of the problem
14. What was the reaction of the church to the problem
15. How do religious leaders perceive women who are victims of sexual liaison?
16. Could you please give an outline of the steps taken so far by Exxon-Mobil and other oil companies to solve the problem of sexual liaison in the Niger Delta?
17. Do you think the steps taken by Exxon-Mobil and other oil companies can solve the problems of sexual liaison?
18. Please give reasons for your answer.
19. What do you think church leaders can do to contribute to alleviating the problems faced by women victims of sexual liaison?
20. What do you think church leaders can do to contribute to alleviating the challenges faced by 'fatherless' children?
21. Could you please give an outline of healing therapy given to victims of sexual liaisons by your church?
22. As church leaders, what do you think should be the role of the church in solving the problems associated with sexual liaisons?