

**TITLE PAGE**

**MEDIA EXPOSURE, POLICY AGENDA-  
SETTING AND RISK COMMUNICATION IN  
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

**A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA'S NIGER  
DELTA REGION**

**EDAFIENENE AGHOGHO KINGSLEY  
STUDENT NUMBER: 06112617**

**SUPERVISED BY  
DR VIAN BAKIR  
DR PHILIP MITCHEL  
DR DAVID BARLOW (RETIRED)**



**SECOND TITLE PAGE**

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**BEING A SPECIAL THESIS WORK SUBMITTED TO THE  
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## **ABSTRACT**

My research investigated the extent to which the Nigerian media have alerted the public and key opinion formers to risk-related issues / conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta region in order to shape the Nigerian public policy sphere as a response to the reoccurring [1958-2009] conflict between the government, oil host communities and independent multinational oil companies operating in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region over economic embarrassment due to underdevelopment and environmental degradation. Drawing on the recent academic literature on policy agenda-setting, risk communication and trust communication, my research explored Research Questions on risk communication and risk perception linking policy agenda-setting that would be of great benefit for the Nigerian policy-makers, and indeed oil companies to understand. The researcher addressed these Research Questions through a survey [1,200 questionnaires] of Nigerians and interviews [10] with key people in Nigeria. These Research Questions are very timely and penetrating, in what has been, to date, a very under-researched area – namely, investigating the flows and impacts of trust-risk communication in agenda setting in a less-developed country. The researcher used three states in Nigeria's Niger Delta region namely, Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers for the purpose of this research because conflict and risk issues is most pronounced in the aforementioned states due to oil exploration / exploitation and underdevelopment. Findings from this research revealed that the Nigerian media-policy-public agendas face specific problems in influencing one another on environmental risk issues and other facet of the conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. These specific problems which reflect gaps in knowledge in the Niger Delta conflict have now been outlined, so needing further attention and work by stakeholders in the public policy field with regards to the Niger Delta conflict. To this end, areas in need of research focus were outlined and several recommendations were made by the researcher which if adopted by the Nigerian government / policy makers, the media, oil companies and other stakeholders will help douse Nigeria's Niger Delta conflict.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

TITLE PAGE.....	i
SECOND TITLE PAGE.....	ii
STUDENT DECLARATION.....	iii-v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	viii-xi
LIST OF CHARTS.....	xii-xiii
ACRONYMS FULL DESCRIPTION.....	xiv-xv

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1.0 RESEARCH CONTEXT.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....	1-6
1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH.....	6-7
1.3 SCOPE AND COVERAGE.....	7-8
1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN / METHODOLOGY.....	8-9
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	9-10
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	10-11
1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY.....	11-12

### **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.0 INTRODUCTION .....	13
2.0. (i) ETYMOLOGY OF RISK CONCEPT.....	13-14
2.1 RISK: AN INTRODUCTION.....	14-17
2.2 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF RISK.....	17-18
2.3 CONCEPTUALIZING RISK.....	18
2.3.1 THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE.....	18-20
2.3.2 SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE.....	20-21



2.3.2(i) THE CULTURALIST POSITION.....	21-23
2.3.2(ii) THE RISK SOCIETY POSITION.....	23-26
2.3.2(iii) GOVERNMENTALITY POSITION.....	26-27
2.3.2(iv) SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST POSITIONS.....	28-29
2.4 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORKS: POLICY, RISK AND MEDIA.....	29
2.4.1 POLICY AGENDA-SETTING.....	29-33
2.4.2 SOCIAL AMPLIFICATION OF RISK FRAMEWORK (SARF).....	33-36
2.4.3 THE MEDIA AND RISK.....	36-39
2.4.4 INSTITUTIONAL CREDIBILITY AND SOCIAL TRUST.....	40-42
2.4.5 MEDIA, TRUST AND PUBLIC SPHERE.....	43-45
2.4.6 PRESS FREEDOM, MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA.....	45-49
2.4.7 RISK REPORTING AND NIGER-DELTA CRISIS.....	49-52
2.5 RISK ISSUES, STAKEHOLDERS, OIL COMPANIES AND POLICY MAKERS: NIGERIA’S NIGER DELTA REGION.....	53
2.5.1 RISK ISSUES AND OIL COMPANIES IN NIGER DELTA.....	53-59
2.5.2 ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCIES DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION.....	59-60
2.5.3 ENVIRONMENTAL LAW, HUMAN RIGHT AND THE NIGER DELTA.....	60-65
2.5.4 THE RISE OF INTEREST / PRESSURE GROUP.....	65-68
2.5.5 GOVERNMENT REACTION TO PROTEST (PEACEFUL AND VIOLENT).....	68-70
2.5.6 DIRECTION OF POLICIES (FROM 1960 – 2008) IN NIGER DELTA.....	70-74
2.5.7 REFLEXIVE SECTION.....	74-75

### **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.0 INTRODUCTION.....	76
3.0. (i) CASE STUDY RESEARCH METHOD.....	76-77
3.1 AREA OF STUDY.....	78-80

3.1(i) DELTA STATE.....	80-81
3.1(ii) BAYELSA STATE.....	81-82
3.1(iii) RIVERS STATE.....	82
3.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY.....	82-83
3.3 SURVEY METHOD (QUANTITATIVE / QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS).....	83-84
3.3(i) SAMPLING.....	84-86
3.3(ii) INSTRUMENTATION / DESIGNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	86-90
3.3(iii) DISTRIBUTION AND METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION.....	90-91
3.3(iv) POPULATION OF THE STUDY.....	91-92
3.3(v) METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS.....	92
3.4 INTERVIEWING (QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY).....	93-94
3.4(i) POPULATION OF THE STUDY.....	94-95
3.4(ii) DISTRIBUTION AND METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION.....	95-97
3.4(iii) METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS.....	97
3.5 ETHICAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THIS RESEARCH.....	97-98
3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES RELATING TO THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT.....	98
3.6(i) COLLECTING INFORMATION.....	98-100
3.6(ii) SEEKING CONSENT.....	100
3.6(iii) PROVIDING INCENTIVES.....	100-101
3.6(iv) MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY.....	101
3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES RELATING TO THE RESEARCHER.....	101
3.7(i) AVOIDING BIAS.....	102-103
3.7(ii) USING VALID METHODOLOGY.....	103-107
3.7(iii) INAPPROPRIATE USE OF INFORMATION.....	107

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

4.0 RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS.....	108-154
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**CHAPTER FIVE**

<b>5.0</b>	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS / RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	155-189
<b>5.1</b>	SUMMARY OF KEY / INTERESTING FINDINGS.....	190-194
<b>5.2</b>	CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION.....	195-198
<b>5.3</b>	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	199-201
	APPENDIX 1.....	202-206
	APPENDIX 11.....	207-270
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	271-290

## LIST OF CHARTS

### SECTION A

<b>FIGURE 1:</b> Representing the total number of questionnaires distributed, retrieved and lost.....	108-109
<b>FIGURE 2:</b> Distribution of respondents by sex.....	109-110
<b>FIGURE 3:</b> Distribution of respondents by age.....	110-111
<b>FIGURE 4:</b> Distribution of respondents by location.....	111-112
<b>FIGURE 5:</b> Distribution of respondents by profession.....	112

### SECTION B

<b>CHART 1:</b> Which is most important to you when getting information on the Niger Delta crisis?.....	113-114
<b>CHART 2:</b> In general, how satisfied are you with media reporting and coverage on the Niger Delta crisis?.....	115-117
<b>CHART 3:</b> Do you think the media has brought the risks of environmental degradation to government attention through heavy media coverage?.....	117-119
<b>CHART 4:</b> Who do you trust to tell the truth on risk events (environmental degradation) linked to the conflict in Niger Delta?.....	119-121
<b>CHART 5:</b> Who, in your opinion, should be held responsible for the conflict in the Niger Delta?.....	121-125
<b>CHART 6:</b> How do you perceive the risk of environmental degradation to humans, plants and animals in the Niger Delta?.....	125-127
<b>CHART 7:</b> Who precisely, would you say, most shapes your awareness about risks of environmental degradation in Niger Delta?.....	127-129
<b>CHART 8:</b> How often does the media offer indigenes of oil host communities the opportunity to partake in a public debate with policy makers on environmental degradation and the conflict in Niger Delta?.....	129-131
<b>CHART 9:</b> How would you categorise press freedom in present day democracy in	

Nigeria?.....	131-133
<b>CHART 10:</b> Do you think press freedom has actually become better or worse since democracy was installed in Nigeria?.....	133-134
<b>CHART 11:</b> How would you rate the environmental standard of operation by oil companies in the Niger Delta?.....	134-137
<b>CHART 12:</b> Do you think the environmental standard of oil companies has changed for the better or worse since democracy was installed in Nigeria?.....	137-139
<b>CHART 13:</b> How would you describe the quality of life in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta?.....	139-142
<b>CHART 14:</b> Have you or anyone in your community suffered casualties as a result of government military operation with militants in the Niger Delta?.....	142-143
<b>CHART 15:</b> How would you describe government response to the plight of indigenes in oil host communities in the Niger Delta in cases of environmental pollution?.....	144-145
<b>CHART 16:</b> In general, how would rate government response to end the Niger Delta conflict through the provision of basic amenities in the region?.....	145-146
<b>CHART 17:</b> Do you think the creation of Ministry of Niger Delta alongside the operation of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) will end the conflict in the Niger Delta?.....	147-147
<b>CHART 18:</b> Who, in your opinion, engages more in developmental projects in the Niger Delta?.....	149-151
<b>CHART 19:</b> Considering the widespread gas flaring in the Niger Delta, do you think it is contributing to global warming?.....	151-153
<b>CHART 20:</b> Are you aware of any time when indigenes of oil producing communities in Niger Delta ignored warnings of the risk involved in disrupting oil pipe Lines from authorities that led to casualties or deaths?.....	153-154

**ACRONYMS FULL DESCRIPTION**

AG – Associated Gas

ATROPA – Association of Traditional Rulers in the Oil Producing Area

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation

CH<sub>4</sub> – Methane

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

CNG – Compressed Natural Gas

CO<sub>2</sub> – Carbon dioxide

COMA – Coalition for Militant Action in the Niger Delta

DESOPADEC – Delta State Oil Producing Area Development Commission

DPR – Department of Petroleum Resources

DSEPA – Delta State Environmental Agency

DTHA – Delta State House of Assembly

FEPA- Federal Environmental Protection Agency

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GHG – Green House Gas

INC – Ijaw National Congress

IPA – Ijaw Peoples Association

IYM – Ijaw Youth Council

JTF – Joint Task Force

LGAs – Local Government Areas

LNG – Liquefied Natural Gas

MEND – Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta

MOSOP – Movement for the survival of the Ogoni People

NBC – Nigerian Broadcast commission

NDBDA – Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority

NDDB – Niger Delta Development Board

NDDC – Niger Delta Development Commission

NDDC – Niger Delta Development Commission

NDPVF – Niger Delta People Volunteer Force

NDVM – Niger Delta Vigilante Movement  
NIPCO – Nigerian Independent Petroleum Company  
NNPC – Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation  
NOSCR – National Oil spill compensation Rate  
NTA – Nigerian Television Authority  
NUJ – Nigerian Union of Journalist  
OMPAEC – Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission  
OSC – Oil Servicing Companies  
PDP – People Democratic Party  
PM – Prime Minister  
PTF – Petroleum Trust Fund  
SARF – Social Amplification of risk framework  
SPDC – Shell Petroleum Development Company  
SSA – Sub Saharan Africa  
UK – United Kingdom  
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme  
UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund  
US – United States

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

This research investigated the extent to which the Nigerian media have alerted the public and key opinion formers to risk-related issues / conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta region in order to shape the Nigerian public policy sphere as a response to the reoccurring [1958-2009] conflict between the government, oil host communities and independent multinational oil companies operating in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region over economic embarrassment due to underdevelopment and environmental degradation.

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Environmental risk issues emerged in the late twentieth century as a major concern of global activities of industrialisation. By the early twenty-first century, environmental issues started to dominate international agendas for a whole generation of political leaders, government officials, scientists, industrialists, Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and concerned citizens. The awareness of a wide range of risk issues associated with environmental degradation increased greatly and justifiably so (Greene, 2006). 'The concept of risk is now widely used to explain deviations from the norm, misfortune and frightening events' (Lupton: 1999:3). Furthermore, the risk concept assumes human responsibility and that something can be done to avert disaster (Lupton: 1999). This modernist notion of risk represented a new form of viewing the globe and the unforeseen consequences of industrialisation and its chaotic manifestation and contingencies, which have exerted a dominant and naturally unexpected influence on the difficulties and problems we face (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006). The concept of risk in late modernity has attracted intense study from social scientists - for two core purposes. First, the increasing complexities of modern technologies and of the organisations that govern our lives (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006: 2); second, alongside the proof that uncertainty and risk are endemic, and that contemporary technology and social organisations are unable



to eradicate it, it is rapidly acknowledged that risk and uncertainty also involve socio-political questions of adequacy and of challenge. The capacity for resolution through technical resources alone is limited, once risk issues become politicized (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006). The concept of risk has generated greater empirical engagement with risk-oriented social theory such as risk society, the cognitive science perspective, governmentality position, social constructionist position and the culturalist position (see, Bakir, 2010). This study examined some of the risk-orientated social theories in response to the risk issues associated with environmental degradation in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

My research questions emerged from a number of pre-existing theoretical frameworks on policy, risk and media; these frameworks are discussed further in chapter two. The policy agenda-setting literature looked into how the media influence public opinion on issues which gain primacy in the society, thereby constructing policy agenda frameworks (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). However, my study further confirmed that the policy agenda-setting literature offered little empirical insight into media-policy linkages in risk issues (Bakir, 2006). Whilst risk communication tends to rectify gaps in public knowledge on risk issues, research in the field of risk communication identified the apparent failure of the paternalistic top-down communication activities (Petts et al, 2001). In view of this flaw in risk communication, my study turned to the social amplification of risk framework (SARF) for insights into risk communication. SARF was formulated as a response to the disjunctures between the different parts of risk research, to rectify the deficit of our knowledge about the social process that can mediate between a risk and its outcomes (Breakwell et al, 2001). Thus, the SARF framework describes the different dynamic of social process underlying risk response and perception embedded within risk amplification and attenuation (Petts et al, 2001; Kasperson et al, 2003). However, studies on SARF for example the 128-hazard event study (Kasperson et al, 1992 and Renn et al, 1992) and the qualitative research on six risk events (Kasperson, 1992) focused on hypothetical events rather than actual occurrences and failed to address the factors that influence individuals' responses to real-life risk issues (Petts et al, 2001) which my study presents. Hence, Rayner (1988) argue that the framework does not give a full account of

the complexity and richness of individual risk-related behaviour (Horlick-Jones et al, 2003). My research draws upon rather different intellectual roots but distinct work which has developed over a period of time, specifically, the pragmatic approach to assessing SARF that brings fresh insight in understanding the longevity of a risk-related event (Horlick-Jones et al, 2003) and integration of insights drawn from studies of policy process and socio-political and economic analysis (Gowda, 2003). The SARF mentions a range of social and individual amplification stations, thus, this study deemed it important in evaluating the utility of the framework in Nigeria's Niger Delta region to consider the relationships between all of the levels of data that SARF identifies; the physical characteristics of a risk event, media coverage, public reaction, risk perception and societal impact (Burns et al, 1993 in Breakwell et al, 2001; Horlick-Jones et al, 2003). An increasingly studied area within this particular amplification mechanism is that of trust, which is imperative in risk communication (Bakir, 2006: 4). Psychometric studies failed to identify how individuals respond / talk about trust and why some institutions are more trusted than others (Petts et al, 2001). This is because they presented individuals with a list of institutions and particularly ask them which ones they trust the most. Thus, this approach formulates assumptions about lay people's perceptions and sometimes offers people rather false comparisons (Petts et al, 2001). To mitigate against this, my study utilised a more exploratory approach to individuals' trust in institutions that may act to amplify or attenuate risk issues in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

Linking trust to risk communication determines how the media enable active citizenship. To appreciate the complexity of this relationship, it is useful to utilise the concept of the public sphere, which is centred on the relationships that exist between the media, state, citizens and business institutions. Inexorably, as in the case of all relationships, this involves the issue of trust (Boyd-Barrett, 1995). However, the underlying principle reinforcing this approach to communication - which aims to bring about trust through sharing knowledge and reciprocal understanding - 'can be contrasted with that of its polar opposite, strategic action and instrumental rationality, where communication is goal-oriented and manipulative' (Bakir and Barlow, 2007: 18; also see Dahlgren, 2001). The operational activity of commercial mass media in modern society is the drive for

profit, which conceives media in connection to consumers in a market rather than individuals in a public sphere (Butsch, 2007). Thus, as the media became commercialized it no longer offered access to the citizens for rational-critical debate on issues concerning the state (Calhoun, 1992, Garnham, 1992, 1995; Bakir and Barlow, 2007). The process of maintaining the public sphere is far from ideal, due to the complex nature of modern societies and the inevitable role the media play in the economic sphere (notably, the field of advertising) to survive (see Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

In order to understand the contemporary complex nature of the public sphere and why it is far from ideal in Nigeria [apart from the economic sphere], this study turned to press freedom in Nigeria for insights into how media institutions have been operating since democracy was installed in Nigeria [1999-2010]. The assessment and evaluation of media structure and degree of press freedom in Nigeria depends on different factors, such as the types of media ownership that exist, the political system, the economy, the judiciary, control tactics, media pluralism and democratisation. The Nigerian media structure comprises private and government media ownership, which affect the degree of press freedom that exists at a given time. Furthermore, the type of political system that exists in Nigeria at a given time can also determine the degree of press freedom (Agbese, 2006). However, the Nigerian media have fared significantly better since democracy was installed in Nigeria [1999-2010] than they had during the preceding sixteen years of military regime. This study revealed that the Nigerian media still faces some sort of handicap especially in the area of freedom of information bill which has not been passed into law. The democratic president Yar'Adua [deceased, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010] who took over power from Obansajo on May 29, 2007 indicated that he would sign into law the freedom of information bill, which the Obansajo government [1999-2007] rejected. However, as yet the bill has not been passed. The ideal of this bill was designed to liberate and give Nigerian citizens, including the media, a right of access to public information (IREX, 2007), thereby resuscitating the public sphere as citizens can get access to public information through dialogue, debate and discussion (Ashong and Udouo 2008; Olusola, 2008).

Notwithstanding media ownership issues and the challenges to press freedom in Nigeria, the media are also seen to play a major role in risk communication. In an overview of media-risk research directions, Bakir (2010: 5) observes that such research tends to:

‘highlight the media’s role in: providing risk knowledge to inform citizens; generating and determining public acceptability of different risks; motivating the public to take responsibility for, and action regarding, risks; and providing imaginative schemata regarding voluntary chosen risks’.

However, my study identified several trends in studies of the sociology of news in risk reporting, not least that it is guided by journalistic institutional traditions and norms which have little relationship to actual threat directions. Risk reporting clusters around major risk occurrences, ‘ignoring multi-causal, long-term or hypothetical risks and influenced by commitments to balance and truth, both concepts liable to founder against the value-laden rocks of uncertainty when reporting risk’ (Bakir, 2008: 2; also see, Bakir, 2010; Campbell 2008). As risk events create public reaction to risk signals such as interpreter, sender and receiver [risk signals are discussed further in chapter two] from cooperative action, it stimulates pressure and interest group member responses to systematically negotiate risk issues by attempting to influence policy through the media (Kasperson, et al, 2003; Bakir, 2006). Research into the activities of multinational oil companies in developing countries, especially in Nigeria’s Niger-Delta region, revealed that risk issues are largely associated with environmental degradation due to oil exploitation and exploration (Idowu, 1999; Akpan, 2008).

Violation of political and civil rights have been executed mainly in response to demonstrations about activities of multinational institutions that produce Nigeria’s oil and the use made of the oil funds by the Nigerian government without developing the source of the nation’s wealth [Niger Delta]. The insensitivity of the government and the multinational oil companies to the plight of the inhabitants of the host oil communities have metamorphosed into an arena characterised by militants, pipeline vandalism and hostage-taking of oil workers for ransom (Adedoja, 2007; Africa Action, 1999). The late

democratic president Umaru Yar'Adua who assumed office in 2007 continued with the vision of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) which was created by the previous democratic government (1999-2007) and also indicated a fifteen year master plan for the region because of the unabated agitation (Akpan, 2008). In view of expanding projects in the Niger Delta, Yar' Adua made known his intention in 2008 to create a new ministry - Niger Delta Ministry, which took effect in 2008 to tackle the unending challenges in the region (Walker, 2008; Reuters, 2008). This move by the late president in creating another commission, however, did prompt debate between critics; an activist and human rights lawyer notes that creating the Niger Delta ministry generates more bureaucracy that will avoid the real issues in the Niger Delta region (Akpan, 2008).

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to investigate the impact of media exposure on policy by shaping public perception of risk about the ongoing crisis that has resulted in violence and underdevelopment; and by shaping policy makers' perception of public opinion on the effect of risk associated with environmental degradation, which is a benchmark case for risk communication in the Niger Delta. This research unpicked the web of issues the crisis has mobilized and also explores trust, risk communication and policy agenda-setting.

## **1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH**

The motivation for this research was as a response to the conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta region over underdevelopment and environmental degradation despite the large financial resources that have been allocated to the Niger Delta within the last ten years of democracy in Nigeria. 'The developmental challenges of the region remained substantially unaddressed, a development that further increased the tempo of violent agitations and restiveness in the region' (Adedoja, 2007: 1). The neglect of these facts and the conspiracy by the corrupt government and multinational oil companies has increased conflicts of interest over the years. At the time of writing, the struggle for resource [wealth] management is most pronounced in Nigeria's Niger Delta region due to the abuse and misuse of power (Osinachi, 2006).

The surge in militant groups and kidnapping of expatriates for ransom exacerbated the Niger Delta's crisis; this recent trend of development further put pressure on the Nigerian government to resolve the crisis that has befallen the region. When the late president Yar, Adua assumed office in 2007, he made known that the development of the Niger Delta region was top in his priority list (Adedjoja, 2007). In addition, the vice president Goodluck Jonathan [current president, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010] who is from the Niger Delta also indicated that his key aim is to stabilise the region's crisis within the first six months of this present administration. In pursuit of this goal, the federal government constituted a peace and reconciliation committee with the mandate to concentrate on conflict resolution within the next 12 months. Prior to this, the late president noted that oil companies operating in the country would have to pay 'heavily' for oil spillage (Africa Action, 1999; Adedjoja, 2007). In response to the motivation for this study, my research has unpicked the web of issues the crisis has mobilised and also explores risk-oriented social theory and policy agenda frameworks as a backdrop for conjuring realistic research questions. However, the findings from this research will add to the existing body of knowledge in the research community and would be of great benefit for the Nigerian public policy field and multinational oil companies to understand.

### **1.3 SCOPE AND COVERAGE**

The enormity of conflict and risk issues is pronounced in three states in the Niger Delta region namely: Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers which produce a significant percentage of crude oil and also experience violence between the government, indigenes of oil host communities and multinational oil corporations. However, the researcher chose the aforementioned states for this study because the risk events emanating from crude oil exploration and violent agitation in the region seem to overwhelm policy formulation in the region. In addition, the aforementioned states receive more federal allocation than other states in the Niger Delta because they produce the most crude oil and yet experience utmost violence (Nwabuwale, 2008). Taking into account the enormity of conflict due to environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, the researcher acquired adequate

information from the target population in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State because the awareness of the conflict would be prevalent in these states.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN / METHODOLOGY**

The main methodology for this research is that of the case study. The case study research methodology entails testing theoretical models or theories by applying them in real world situations, that is, testing if scientific theories and models actually work in real life scenario. Notably, case study is an in-depth study of a specific situation, 'it is a research method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic' (Shuttleworth, 2008: 1). The research design the researcher adopted for this study is the survey (quantitative / qualitative) method and interview (qualitative) method. Both methods will be explained below:

The survey method involves the collection of data from a large or even very large population. Notably, through the use of a representative sample, all surveys aim to explain the features or opinions of a population. Embedded in sample survey are three distinct methodologies; sampling, designing questions and data collection. Each of these methods has many functions outside of sample surveys; however, if used together develops a good survey design (Fowler, 2002). Sampling is the procedure used in selecting a few (a sample) from a larger group (the sampling population) in order to form the basis for predicting the spread of an unknown section of information or outcome regarding the larger group (May, 1997; Kumar, 2005). In social science research, the category of the study population, the resources available and the nature of research question will determine the type of research instrument to use. The research instrument for the quantitative part of this study is the questionnaire (May, 1997). The target population for this study are respondents within the age of twenty-one years and above, and are both male and female from the selected states [Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers] in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, the research data gathered was analysed using Microsoft Excel Package and the responses from the target population was analysed using bar charts.

Qualitative interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods to obtain information from individuals or understand our fellow human beings in social sciences (Fontana and Frey, 1998). 'Insights gained from qualitative interviewing may improve the quality of survey design and interpretation' (Gaskell, 2000: 39). For the purpose of this research, the researcher adopted the semi-structured interview as questions were specified / fixed on the issues investigated, however, this will allow the researcher to probe beyond the questions in the questionnaires and thus engage the interviewee in a dialogue (May, 1997). The target population for the interviews were with a range of key people who may act to amplify or attenuate risk communication about environmental degradation by the major oil companies in the Niger Delta [community leaders, journalists, policy-makers, politicians, government officials, environmental agencies and civil servants]. However, the population of this study is linked to different facets of the conflict; that is, they hold vital information in their area of profession as compared to the larger population used for the quantitative aspect of this research that may just be aware of the conflict around their immediate surroundings. Qualitative interviewing presents the researcher with a variety of analysis to choose from after successful completion of the interview. The analysis employed for this purpose is a combination of results from the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire at the same time when analysing the data. The reason for this combination is to get a fuller picture or knowledge about the issues in the study which is wider than that a single approach would have provided or to mutually confirm the findings of both approaches. Here, the qualitative and quantitative methods will complement each other on the issues in this study and this is regarded as the complementary compensation of the flaws and blind spot of each single method (Flick, 2002). The methodology will be explained in details in chapter three of this study.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

These research questions were formulated before this study started in response to the Niger Delta conflict in Nigeria. The researcher addressed these research questions through a survey [1,200 questionnaires] of Nigerians and interviews [ten] with key people in Nigeria. These research questions are very timely and penetrating, in what has been, to



date, a very under-researched area – namely, investigating the flows and impacts of trust-risk communication in agenda setting in a developing country.

1. To what extent can media exposure influence policy maker's perception about public opinion on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict?
2. Can media exposure shape the Nigerian public's perception on policy issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict?
3. How effectively have the Nigerian media communicated risk issues on contemporary environmental degradation in the affected oil communities of the Niger Delta?
4. What are the issues of trust between the Nigerian government, oil companies and the oil affected communities?
5. Are there any strengths or weaknesses of media exposure in influencing the Nigerian government's policy relating to the Niger Delta conflict?

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The researcher has answered the research questions that were formed at the start of this study breaking new grounds in the research field of media and communication, thereby adding to the existing body of literature. Existing literatures on policy agenda-setting, risk communication and trust tends to focus on the west - it is worth noting here that the achievement or failure of attempts at dealing with risk in the industrialized west inheres with Africa. In order to further the field of risk-trust communication both in the west and Africa, this research from the Niger-Delta context has produced results on issues / levels of trust in key institutions such as oil companies, politicians, government, media and other relevant institutions that may act to amplify or attenuate risk communication. The study has unveiled an understanding of the conceptual perspectives of risk that will help to shape the Nigerian public policy field on risk issues. However, understanding issues of trust for institutions and risk perception on environmental degradation from Nigeria's Niger Delta perspective, the researcher has discovered through Nigerians' response via field work the extent to which policy-agenda setting by competing establishments [media, public and policy-makers] can work in this study or studies similar to this. In the

literature review [in Chapter Two], new routes are created to address the gaps in several academic literatures used in this study; thus, this will add to the existing body of knowledge. This research will certainly be of benefit to the Nigerian government on the direction of policy in the Niger Delta region on risk issues and also help policy-makers to work within Nigerians' response and understanding in ameliorating the web of issues the crisis has mobilised while allowing voices of indigenous oil host communities to be heard. In addition, my study has exposed the focal areas of the crisis that needs effective conflict management skills and resolution that will assist government / policy makers, media, oil companies and individuals in the crisis-affected areas to a great extent in ameliorating the crisis and bring development and lasting peace to the region through its outcome. Key findings are presented in chapter four and five of this study.

### **1.7 LIMITATION OF THIS STUDY**

In this study, there were limitations that prevented the researcher from conducting an extensive research especially before, during and after the field work of this study; these limitations include financial and time constraints. Before the field work actually started, the researcher had to wait for two months in search of finance to accommodate the travel and living expenses the field work would incur thereby consuming time which would have being used to advance the field work almost immediately. During the field work of this study, due to the limited amount of resources / funds available, the researcher could only afford to conduct ten interviews out of the proposed eighteen interviews in order to stay within the actual budget for this purpose and meet the set deadline for data collection and return date to the UK as the researcher was also engaged in conducting the qualitative aspect of this research. In other words, the researcher used eight weeks instead of the proposed twelve weeks for the field work, which was not enough considering the wide geographical areas used for the study; an extra four weeks would have given the researcher more time in the retrieval of more questionnaires and in conducting more interviews. After the field work, the researcher had to wait for another two months in order to meet the challenges of living expenses back in the UK before attending to the research work. These limitations were quite disturbing, discouraging and challenging;

however, it did not prevent the researcher from emerging with useful results / outcome of this study. It will be worth noting here that specific methodological limitations and how the researcher addressed them are discussed in chapter three.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter critically reviewed pertinent academic oriented literatures on Media Exposure, Policy Agenda-Setting and Risk Communication in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Drawing on recent academic literatures on risk oriented theory, policy and media; key books, journal articles, newspaper publications and credible internet sources were consulted to help formulate needed theoretical frameworks and appropriateness of adopted research method.

##### **2.0. (i) ETYMOLOGY OF RISK CONCEPT**

The term 'risk' has its definition in a vast range of distinct sub-disciplines and professions that have arisen from the 'multitudinous' realm of definitional uses given to the term (Althaus, 2005: 570). Risk as a concept was first coined by the early western explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Denney, 2005), with Giddens suggesting the term assimilated into the English language from the Portuguese and Spanish, and referred to sailing into uncharted waters (1999 in Althaus, 2005: 570). Rosa, citing Timmerman, believes it to derive from French in the 1660s, 'which had been adopted (though its exact origins remain obscure)' (2003: 64). Luhmann (1993: 9) asserts that the word risk originated in Germany in references in the pre-modern period and that the renaissance Latin term *riscum* had long been in existence (see Lupton, 1999 and Althaus, 2005), before the origin of Italian word '*risco, riscare, rischiare*' meaning to cruise among dangerous rocks (Rosa, 2003: 64).

Risk originated from the Arabic word *risq* meaning a gift from God which you draw profit (Wharton, 1992). The concept of risk first appeared in the Middle Ages and was connected to the evolving idea of maritime insurance (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006),

‘and was used to designate the perils that could compromise a voyage’ (Althaus, 2005: 570). At that time, risk indicated the possibility of an objective danger, a force majeure, an act of God, a tempest or other dangers of the sea that could not be ascribed to wrongful conduct (Lupton, 1999). This idea of risk, therefore, disassociated the concept of human defect and accountability. Risk was not attributed to man made but was perceived as natural event, for example epidemic, storm, flood, failing harvest. As such, humans could hardly interpret or estimate the likelihood of such occurrences and take measures to abridge their impact (Denney, 2005, Lupton, 1999).

## **2.1 RISK: AN INTRODUCTION**

In the pre-modern era, dangers and threats to humans was associated with war, hunger, cold, epidemic disease, pestilence and failing harvest. More specifically, the threats posed by demons, bands of brigands, wild dogs, evil portents (Denney, 2005) and subsequently, epidemic of such diseases as smallpox, typhoid, whooping cough, dysentery, syphilis constantly struck villages and towns, destroying their populations. At this time, dangers to life were deemed incalculable and were ascribed to external and supernatural causes. The description of everyday life and beliefs in historical and sociological context portrays how individuals dealt with danger, fear and hazard (Lupton, 1999: Beck, 1995). In late modernity, equally potentially lethal dangers have replaced that of previous era (Denney, 2005). ‘The concept of risk is now widely used to explain deviations from the norm, misfortune and frightening events’ (Lupton, 1999: 3). Furthermore, the risk concept assumes human responsibility and that something can be done to avert disaster (Lupton: 1999).

Changes in the meanings and use of risk have always accompanied the advancement of human society (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006; Lupton, 1999; for citations, see Sahlins 1974; Garnsey, 1988; Gallant; 1991). The concept of risk during the eighteenth century had begun to metamorphose into an arena of scientific calculation, drawing upon new mathematical concepts relating to probability. The advancement of the statistical calculations of risk and the growth of insurance in early industrialism meant that:

(Lupton, 1999), 'Consequences that at first affect only the individual became "risk", systematically caused, statistically describable and in that sense "predictable" types of events, which can therefore also be subjected to supra-individual and political rules of recognition, compensation and avoidance' (Beck, 1992a: 99). In late modernity, the perception of risk was no longer attributed entirely to nature, but was also in human beings and their activities in society (Ewald 1993 cited in Lupton, 1999).

This modernist notion of risk represented a new form of viewing the globe and the unforeseen consequences of industrialisation and its chaotic manifestation and contingencies, which have exerted a dominant and naturally unexpected influence on the difficulties and problems we face (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006). It assumed that the uncertainty and unforeseen outcomes may be the repercussion of human activities rather than attributing it to agencies beyond human control such as, luck, destiny, fate, divine agency or the indescribable intentions of the divine being mainly replacing earlier notions of fortuna or fate (Giddens, 1990; Taylor-Gooby and Zinn 2006; Lupton, 1999; Beck, 1992).

The concept of risk in late modernity has attracted intense study from social scientists - for two core purposes. The first is the increasing complexities of modern technologies and of the organisations that govern our lives. Deficiencies of modernisation and technology are well publicized. This applies to the Thalidomide tragedy (emerging in 1962), Bhopal (1984), Chernobyl (1986), Exxon Valdez oil spill (1989), BSE outbreak from 1986 to 1996, GM crops and the Columbia space shuttle in 2003, Oil spill from sunken rig in United States (US) (2010), Icelandic volcano cloud and its impact on air travel in Europe (2010). These events depict how risk has accompanied technical advancement and revealed the shortcomings of organisations for managing the resulting uncertainty (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006; see also Huges et al, 2006). Technical developments are constantly associated with issues of uncertainty. 'It is the increasing complexity of the processes involved, both in terms of the coordination of myriad activities in planning and in terms of the institutions through which risk are governed', and the prevalence in public knowledge of weaknesses in risk management that account

for the peculiar contemporary force of risk concept (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006: 2). Second, alongside the proof that uncertainty and risk are endemic, and that contemporary technology and social organisations are unable to eradicate it, it is rapidly acknowledged that risk and uncertainty also involve socio-political questions of adequacy and of challenge. The capacity for resolution through technical resources alone is limited, once risk issues become politicized (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006).

Modernist concepts of risk assert the idea that risk could be both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ (Althaus, 2005; Denney, 2006; Lupton, 1999). The concept of risk as it advanced in insurance is associated with ideas of damage and loss on the one hand and chance or probability on the other. These two sets of ideas originated in the notion of uncertainty such as accident, against which one insures oneself. From this viewpoint, risk is a neutral idea, ‘denoting the probability of something happening, combined with the magnitude of associated losses or gains’ (Lupton, 1999: 8). Towards the end of the twentieth century, the distinctions between risk and uncertainty or chance, tends to be somewhat lost. Risk has become a loose term in everyday parlance. Issues of probability calculations are not necessarily imperative to the colloquial use of risk (Althaus, 2005; Lupton, 1999). The positive aspect of risk, as Althaus contends, is no longer acknowledged and the term risk in every day language is largely associated with something negative (2005: 575; see also, Douglas, 1992; Lupton 1999). The term risk now stands for danger and ‘high risk means a lot of danger’ (Douglas, 1992; 24). Generally, risk is no longer related to positive outcomes but related only to undesirable or negative outcomes, especially when it is related to technical assessment of risk (Lupton, 1999). The dilemma that instantaneously appears from the ‘increased emphasis on the positive and negative aspects of risk is the question of how to balance risk against advantage’ (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006:7).

The colloquial use of risk by lay people tends to almost exclusively refer to a danger, hazard, threat and harm. As a consequence, human perception of risk and cognitive capabilities are inherently incomplete. Thus, an apparatus of expert research, awareness and opinion has expanded around the concept of risk: risk communication, risk management, risk analysis and risk assessment are all important disciplines of research

practice, used to calculate and control risk in different fields as far-ranging as economics, public health, anthropology, business, law, mathematics, medicine and industry (Rosa, 2003; Lupton 1999; Althaus, 2005). Modernists have also pointed to transformations in the nature of risks, as they contend, risks have become more globalized, less identifiable, and more severe in their consequences and therefore cannot be easily controlled and are anxiety-provoking (Beck, 1992; Lupton 1999).

According to Lupton, it may be argued that in late modernity the obsession with the idea of risk has its foundations in the transformation of societies from pre-industrialism to early industrialism to late industrialism (1999: 10; see also Beck 1992b). In her writing, she also acknowledged that these transformations in societies are accompanied with an increasing sense of uncertainty, complexity, ambivalence and disorder, an increasing distrust of traditional authorities and social institutions and a growing knowledge of the threats inherent in everyday life. The concept of risk has metamorphosed into an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and uncertainty. Concern about risk has increased because of a general mood of dissatisfaction and disorientation, 'a sense that we are living in a time of endings and major disruptive change' (Lupton, 1999: 12).

## 2.2 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF RISK

Philosophical debate surrounds risk literature on ontological (metaphysical) and epistemological (knowledge) concepts of risk. Thompson questions if risk is classified as a metaphysical or epistemological concept. He provides the following definitions that are widely used in different risk literature to differentiate these risk phenomena. First, **subjective risk**: the psychological position of a person who experiences uncertainty as to the outcome of a given occurrence. Second, **objective risk**: the difference in occurrence when actual losses differ from expected losses. Third, **real risk**: the combination of harmful outcome and probability that exist in the real world. Fourth, **observed risk**: the calculation of that combination obtained by creating a model of real world. Fifth: **perceived risk**: the rough estimate made by lay-people of the general public (1986 in Althaus, 2005). Embedded in these definitions is a particular difference between an



ontological approach, risk as a reality that is present in its own right in the world (e.g., objective risk and real risk), and epistemological approach, risk as a reality by virtue of human judgement or applying some knowledge to uncertainty (e.g., subjective risk, observed risk, perceived risk) (Althaus, 2005; Rosa, 2003). The epistemological reality of risk exists by virtue of judgments made under conditions of uncertainty. From an economics perspective, the epistemological concept of risk and uncertainty relates to the unknown, but that risk is an attempt to manage the unknown by virtue of knowledge based on the orderliness of the world and uncertainty cannot be managed or predicted because of its totally random nature (Althaus, 2005).

### **2.3 CONCEPTUALIZING RISK**

In social scientific literature, risk phenomenon can be addressed in a number of ways. The most common is the realist approach to risk perspective, which has developed and is mainly expressed in technico-scientific approaches. Cognitive science based in psychology principally adopts this approach. An alternative perspective is that of social constructionism, supported by those who are principally interested in the cultural and social aspects of risk. These contrasting perspectives will be analysed in this section using the epistemological approach in which they are based and the distinctive ways in which risk is perceived and represented from an interdisciplinary research area (Lupton, 1999).

#### **2.3.1 THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE**

Technico-scientific approach to risk, originated from different disciplines such as psychology, mathematics and statistics, engineering, epidemiology and economics. They convey together the concept of danger with calculations of probability. Experts and commentators in these fields assert that risk is an outcome of probability and consequences of an undesirable occurrence (Bradbury, 1989; 382 in Lupton, 1999). In the technico-scientific field, expert and lay people controversy tends to centre around the magnitude of severity of a risk in terms of its possible consequences, how precisely a risk

has been calculated and identified, how correct is the science that has been consulted to measure and calculate risk and what are the predictive models that have been designed to know why risks occur and how individuals respond to them in certain ways. Much of technico-scientific literatures address issues such as disparity between government institutions, the public, and scientific and industrial arenas in relation to environmental and health risks associated with science, industry and technology (Lupton, 1999; Althaus, 2005).

In early and late modernity the general public have become more concerned about the activities of industry and government, literatures on risk addressing this conflict tends to identify the psychological and social factors influencing greater public cynicism, distrust of institutions, blame, defensive mechanism and individuals' vulnerability and other aspects of cognition and motivation that differentiate risk behaviour (Lupton, 1999; Althaus, 2005). The objective of the technico-scientific approach is to facilitate understanding between the general public and institutions, 'and as Brown puts it, to provide a route out of ever growing bitterness of clashes between affected publics and the managing institutions' (1989 in Lupton, 1999: 18).

Risks, according to technico-scientific models, are pre-existing in nature and can only be identified through scientific calculation and measurement and managed through this knowledge. The cognitive science approach mostly adopts psychological models of human behaviour to understand how individuals react to risk cognitively and behaviourally. Psychological models also address the contrasting views of the subjective understanding of lay people vis-à-vis the objective scientific view of risk as they are calculated by experts (Althaus, 2005; Lupton, 1999). A number of cognitive science researchers have adopted the psychometric perspective to identify how cognitive factors influence and shape lay responses to risk (Lupton, 1999). These researchers attempt to identify the mental model or heuristics, which uses the conventional notion of rational decision-making to identify cognitive biases in lay people's judgement. The principal concept is that individuals develop theoretical structures that correspond to risks as they understand them. These conceptual structures may be more or less accurate, thus, this

approach seeks to investigate how individuals construct accounts of reality (Slovic, 1987; Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006).

Psychometric researchers have constructed a taxonomy by which hazards or dangers are categorized and dealt with cognitively. They contend that lay people find it difficult to assess risk using probability because they under-estimate and over-estimate some categories of risk (Lupton, 1999). Von Winterfeldt, John, and Borchering assert that ‘risk with low probability but high consequences would be perceived as more threatening than more probable risk with low medium consequences’ (1981 cited in Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006: 30). Psychometric researchers note that occurrences that attract a high level of media attention increase more public concern than those that do not, even if they are relatively rare events; dangers that occur in clusters are deemed more severe than an equivalent number of occurrences that happen over an extended period of time; and the outcome of disasters that happens immediately provoke more concern than those that are delayed, people dread risk that are perceived as unacceptable (grave consequence) to society. Psychometric researchers in attempting to investigate people’s responses to risk in social and cultural group membership, found out that people of social group that are less powerful tend to be more worried than people of powerful social group (Lupton, 1999). Psychometric analysis aims at the individual rational behaviour underpinned by effective philosophy that specifies individuals as self-interested calculating actors (Althaus, 2005).

### **2.3.2 SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

Sociocultural perspectives on risk assert the very aspect technico-scientific and cognitive science approaches have being condemned for ignoring (Lupton, 1999). The sociocultural perspective aims at the individual’s perception and response to risk based on their sociocultural background and identity as a member in a social group, rather than through individual understanding (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982). Risk can be defined from the sociocultural approach as a ‘socially constructed phenomenon although it has some roots in nature’ (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006: 37). The ways in which society or particular

groups perceive risk are embedded in their social institutions (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). The sociocultural dimensions on risk according to Lupton (1999) can be divided into three major groups. First, Mary Douglas and her colleagues that constitutes the cultural / symbolic perspective on risk. Second, the risk society group that principally constitutes the work of sociologists Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. Third, the governmentality theorists who are inspired by the writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault.

### **2.3.2 (i) THE CULTURALIST POSITION**

The culturalist perspective on risk is largely drawn from the works of Mary Douglas (Althaus, 2005), which constitutes an anthropological or cultural-based approach to risk (Denny, 2005). The contemporary awareness of risk and the growth of social movements opposing technical advancement from last decade have shifted in the institutional culture of society, rather than events of new risks. Complex historical transformations have led to increased mobilization of society or citizen's institutions opposing big government, organisations, market values and big money (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; see also Zinn and Taylor-gooby, 2006). According to Althaus, whenever risk is associated within a socio-cultural context, risk becomes politicized (2005: 575). The modern concern with risk is part of a societal backlash against large organisations, 'the political pressure that is brought to bear in relation to risk disputes is largely against exposing others to risk' (Lupton, 1999: 48). This pressure is therefore centred on large institutions to blame and less on society or individuals (Lupton, 1999). Environmental activists and society blame and demonise particular industries and government department over risk associated with ecological degradation and pollution (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982).

These concerns are basically cultural rather than individual. Individual choices are usually not independent especially about big political issues, they come already prepared with culturally learned assumptions and weightings when faced with estimating probability and credibility (Douglas, 1992). According to Lupton, the society or lay people's responses to risk should not be seen as biased if they are different from expert

assessment. ‘Rather, their use and value within a particular cultural context needs to be acknowledged’ (1999: 37). However, culture does not only assist individuals calculate risks but also adds to a mutual rather than an individualistic concept of risk, taking into account communal responsibility and expectations.

‘A community uses its shared, accumulated experience to determine which foreseeable losses are most probable, which probable losses will be most harmful, and which harms may be preventable. A community also set up actors’ model of the world and its scale of values by which different consequences are reckoned grave or trivial’ (Lupton, 1999: 38).

Douglas and Wildavsky constructed a framework for analysing how logic of risk is expressed in a social institution along the two dimensions of ‘grid’ and ‘group’ model (1982 in Althaus, 2005: 575; Denny, 2005; Zinn and Taylor-gooby, 2006). The grid group indexes represent the boundary individuals have created between themselves and the outside world. The grid and group represent a taxonomy of culture that help to understand how people’s experience can determine the way in which risk is perceived (Denny, 2005). The group index constitutes two types of group, those with high group affiliation and those with a low group affiliation. The high group asserts solidarity amongst group members and make strong divisions between the members of the group and the world outside the group, while the low group has weaker ties with others and emphasizes individuality (Lupton, 1999). The grid index is a set of rules which govern the way individuals behave to one another. The grid model constitutes two types, high grid and low grid (Danney, 2005). “‘High grid’ are subject to a large number of cultural constraints, while those who are ‘low grid’ have few constraints shaping their actions” (Lupton, 1999: 50-1).

Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) identifies four ideal types of combined grid and group indexes with respect to risk. They include: **hierarchists** (high group and high grid) have respect for authority and conforms to the dominant societal norms and trust established institutions; **egalitarians** (low grid and high group) they tend to strongly identify with

their groups and hold outsiders responsible for risk; **individualists** (low grid and low group) they trust individuals rather than organisations, self regulation of risk, dislike external constraints, individualistic and entrepreneurial and see the benefits of taking risks, often in profit-making terms as well as dangers with it; **fatalist** (high grid and low group) their approach to risk lack group cohesion, they tend to trust in fate and luck in relation to risk and because there is very little they can do to control it (for citations see, Lupton, 1999; Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006, Althaus, 2005, Denny, 2005, Adams, 1995). However, the overarching contribution of the culturalist position is that risk perception is political and public debates about risk are inevitably debates about politics (Althaus, 2005). My research did not investigate the culturalist model; however, the culturalist position on risk and responses is still controversial and the main problem is that culturalist approach interprets culture as an ‘additional and independent, not as a general underlying factor’ (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006: 38).

### **2.3.2 (ii) THE RISK SOCIETY POSITION**

Risk society has been conceptualized by Beck (1992; 1995; 1996) and seconded by Giddens (1990; 1994; 1998). Beck’s work on risk society (1992) has been influential in the field of theorizing risk (see also Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). Beck asserts that the production of wealth has been accompanied by that of risks as an outcome of modernization. Beck also acknowledges that industrial societies are becoming risk societies in contemporary western societies (Beck, 1992b: 19). Controversies over risk issues in these societies have begun to dominate public, private and political sphere. Individuals in these industrialized societies have a greater knowledge of risk and are meant to deal with risk on a daily basis (Lupton, 1999). However, Beck claims that risks associated with modernization are irreversible threats to mankind, plants and animals. In his writing, he demonstrates that the nature of modern risk cannot be measured spatially, temporally and socially; and that individuals in industrial societies are constantly faced with threats on an unprecedented scale which is often open-ended, rather than occurrences which have a foreseeable end (Beck, 1992b, 13-23; 1995: 13).

Beck differentiates risks in three epochs: pre-modern era or pre-industrialism, early modern era or early industrialism and late modern era or late industrialism (1992b: 3). Beck describes risks in the pre-modern era as threats such as famine, plague, natural disasters, and wars which were attributed to external or supernatural forces and were deemed incalculable. In the early modern era, these threats were now changed into calculable risk due to advancement of instrumental rational control, while in late modernity the processes of calculating threats and risk fail in risk society (1995: 30 see also Lupton, 1999). According to Beck, risk in late industrialism cannot be easily predicted or calculated because of its non-localised nature and long term effect. He further stressed that risk and threats in late modernity cannot be prevented by any organisation or compensated for its damages, given the degree of the threat (1996b: 31). Giddens acknowledged in his writing that risks in late industrialism are far more hazardous and widespread than in previous eras. He termed late industrialism 'as a risk culture', thereby distinguishing it from previous eras because risk awareness in late industrialism is linked to the threats associated with human activities (1991: 3). Giddens contends that people in late industrialism are not more exposed to risk or are more concerned about threat to life than they were in previous eras; however, people in previous eras were also faced with threat to life such as catastrophe destroying mankind and the world on different time scales (1991, 121-2). Lupton in accordance with Giddens demonstrates that threat to life in late modernity is linked to the role human intervention has played, 'resulting in nature 'striking back' for having been so cruelly treated or inappropriately managed' (Lupton, 1999: 65).

Risk in late modernity largely escapes perception. Unlike in previous eras, when risks and threats were thus perceptible to the senses, risk have now transformed into sphere of physical and chemical formulas such as nuclear threat, toxins in food (Beck, 1992b: 21). Thus, these threats exist in scientific knowledge rather than in everyday experience (Lupton, 1999). According to Giddens, knowledge has generated greater uncertainty, the fact that experts disagree has become a known position for almost everyone (1994, 186). Hence lay people in industrial societies can no longer depend on ordinary knowledge, traditional belief, observation, religious precepts and other forms of practice to evaluate

their daily lives, as they did in previous eras, instead they must rely on experts they do not know and are unlikely to ever meet for directions, despite the growing knowledge that experts tend to contradict each other and make mistake when calculating risk (Lupton, 1999; Denny, 2005; for more on experts' contradictions and impacts on public perceptions of risk, see Bennett, 2005; Collins and Pinch, 1998; Irwin and Wynne, 1996). In contemporary society, lay people see science and industry as responsible for the threats about which they are concerned (Denny, 2005). 'Scientists have therefore lost authority in relation to risk assessments: scientific calculations are challenged more and more by political groups and activists' (Becks, 1995 in Lupton 1999: 64).

In late modernity risks and threats are ascribed to be humanly generated rather than supernatural and external forces; these modern catastrophes are considered as the responsibility of humans to control and avert (Beck, 1992b; Giddens, 1990). Notably, the related occurrences of industrialization, globalization, urbanization and modernization and the setbacks of events are constantly confronted and challenged. By these processes, Beck note that risk societies have transcended into world risk society, in which the gravity of risks and threats confronting humanity has created a new type of citizenship, 'global citizenship', which have metamorphosed into new 'alliances of ad hoc activist groups', a new and distinct kind of politics beyond conventional chain of command (1996b, 2; see also Lupton, 1999, 66). The risk society perspective has been criticized in terms of empirical and theoretical evidence (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006; see Tulloch and Lupton, 2003; Lash, 1994; Elliott, 2002). Beck and Giddens notion on the wide spread use of risk language due to the consequences of technical advancement in modern societies and existential situation of humans and their world may be misleading (Rose, 1996). Other criticisms put forward are that Beck's and Giddens' perspectives have broad and loose assumptions about structural and institutional advancements, without grounding these specifically enough in the real circumstances and experiences of organisational and everyday life. Despite these criticisms, Beck and Giddens perspectives on risk in modern societies have been influential in Anglophone sociology (Lupton, 1999, 82). Regardless of these deficiencies, Beck and Giddens perspectives on risk remains relevant to my research as technical advancement / operations of oil multinationals in



Nigeria's Niger Delta region due to the production of wealth has been accompanied by that of risk.

### **2.3.2 (iii) GOVERNMENTALITY POSITION**

The governmentality approach largely constitutes the work of Foucault (1991). In late modernity, states have developed up to date techniques for overseeing their citizens and achieving national goals (Gordon, 1991; Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). Risk from this perspective may be understood as governmental scheme of regulatory power by which citizens are under surveillance and managed through the aspirations of neo-liberalism (Lupton, 1999). Thus, 'the increasing amount of risk communication in society is therefore understood as the result of the growing influence of neo-liberal strategies of government' (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006: 45). Risk is governed through a large network of interactive experts, organisations, practices and knowledges. Information about diverse risks is gathered and analysed by different professionals such as environmental scientist, legal practitioners, statisticians, sociologists, medical researchers and other disciplines. Through these unending efforts, risk is considered problematic, rendered governable and calculable. Also, through these efforts, certain 'social groups are identified as 'at risk' or 'high risk', requiring particular forms of knowledges and interventions' (Lupton, 1999: 87).

The aim of governmentality is not to confront a strong dangerous situation, but to foresee all possible forms of 'irruption' of risk. This preventative measure that constitutes the social policy are now mainly used not only by citizens or individuals needing assistance by the state, but by permutation of factors which constitutes risk assessment that concentrate on the summative population and not the individual. Such state or government activities are carried out on the supposed possibility of consulting risk science as a basis for reducing harm to citizens of the state. 'The control of these probabilities, and protection of individuals from risk, becomes the responsibility of interlocking agencies with varying levels of direct connection with the state' (Denney, 2005: 35). The citizen of the state is no longer treated in a holistic manner but a carrier of

indicators which qualify his or her relationship to a particular group or another which is considered as at risk or risky. Specific safety policies were introduced most prominently social insurance, which supersede the previous class in mercantile society or specific institutions (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). Citizens are now active rather than passive subjects in government discourse of governance. Rather than externally monitored by inter-locking institutions which are directly connected to the state, individuals monitor themselves, they exercise authority upon themselves as standardized subjects who are in search of their own freedom, best interests and improvement, seeking a healthy and happy life (Lupton, 1999).

Within the conceptual framework of Foucauldian perspective, risk and safety are seen as fundamental facet of authority and domination and a plan for the government of societies (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006), which have therefore added to the manufacturing of certain kinds of rationalities, schemes and subjectivity (Lupton, 1999). Risk is thus not considered as an objective fact; rather it represents a particular approach in which aspects of reality can be theorized and deemed controllable (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). It is this schemes and discourses that bring risk into existence, 'that select certain phenomena as being 'risky' and therefore requiring management, either by institutions or individuals' (Lupton, 1999: 102). The governmentality approach has been criticized as over-dependent on a top-down functionalism that tends to elucidate social advancement in requisites of the demands of government and other powerful agencies, to see individuals as inherently exposed to manoeuvring and to have an under-developed account of institution (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). Despite these criticisms, the governmentality perspective is imperative to my research because state control and regulations is an effective way to oversee the welfare of its citizens and managing the local or national resources within a well developed state, hence it is the responsibility of the government to be strong in enforcing its laws to protect citizens from harm (Greene, 2006).

### **2.3.2 (iv) SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST POSITION**

The social constructionist position will be largely drawn from the work of Deborah Lupton (1999), because her research best depicts the social constructionist perspective. This approach to risk has its root in the sociology of knowledge, science and technology and conceptualizing from poststructuralist perspectives. Social constructionists contend that humans exist in a social world through interactive relationships, in which each transforms the other. However, individuals' experiences in the social and material world are objective and pre-existing realities; these realities constitute the reproduction of knowledges and meanings through interactive social relationships and rely upon shared definitions. Through individuals' socialisation in the society, the nature of reality is continually constructed and its meanings are unstable and subject to change. From this approach, knowledge about risks is generated in a sociocultural context, whether in relation to expert, scientist or lay people's knowledge. Thus, risk is therefore not a stagnant, objective phenomenon, but is steadily negotiated and constructed through social interaction and the development of meanings (Lupton, 1999).

Discourse about risk from this approach involves questions of how cultures are represented and defined, and the political stand point in relation to risk. The weak social constructionist position sees risk as objective hazards, threats or danger that is mediated, perceived and responded to in certain ways through social, cultural and political processes. The strong social constructionist position also sees risk as socially constructed but only acknowledged as risk when human actors identify and tag it as such. However, issues of public debates on risk construction are rarely centred on lay people's knowledge but rather on expert knowledge particularly those emanating from science and other relevant discipline embedded within institutional context, which are central to the formation and publicizing of risk. Experts do not ascribe their knowledge to be culturally shaped but prefer to present them as objective universal truth. Nonetheless, "if a 'risk' is understood as a product of perception and cultural understanding, then to draw a distinction between 'real' risks (as measured and identified by 'experts') and 'false' risk

(as perceived by members of the public) is irrelevant”, because these perspectives are describing pattern of risk, and they lead to certain actions (Lupton, 1999: 33).

## **2.4 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORKS: POLICY, RISK AND MEDIA**

Linking together the media, risk and policy change, there are two vital research traditions – namely, social amplification of risk (SARF) and policy agenda setting (Bakir, 2006). These will be elucidated below.

### **2.4.1 POLICY AGENDA-SETTING**

Located within the research paradigm of agenda setting, the word agenda indicates the pertinent and relevant issues which are discussed and prioritized in society (Porche, 2004). In other words, agenda is a list of events and issues that are ranked in a hierarchy of significance in society (Rogers and Dearing, 1988; also see Birkland, 1997). Societies direct their attention, establish agendas and set their priorities for action towards societal conflict because problems are diversified and endless (Berger, 2001). In the process of policy formulation, decision or policy makers must be aware of the competing agendas that may be responsible for influencing the public’s opinion (Porche, 2004). Generally, agenda setting in relation to policy can be classified into three subfields: media agenda setting, the public’s agenda setting and policy agenda setting (Rushefsky and Patel, 1998; Porche, 2004). The plethora of quantitatively-oriented research articles on agenda setting has conceptualized either media agenda setting, public agenda setting, or policy agenda setting as the dependent variable (Rushefsky and Patel, 1998; Rogers and Dearing, 1988) in order to elucidate how it is influenced by other factors (Whitney, 1991).

In the agenda setting framework – what it means to set the agenda – indicates different meanings in each field (Swanson, 1988). The salience of an issue must be increased for public agenda setting to take place. For media agenda setting to occur, issues must be given a significant amount of media coverage, which indicates the extent to which the media agenda has been set. By extension, policy agenda-setting is marked by the

emergence, and importance of the issues or events in the public policy field (Rogers and Dearing, 1988 cited in Whitney, 1991: 348). To reinforce this emphasis made by Whitney (1991), much of the agenda setting scholarly articles demonstrates that the agenda setting process links the activities of public and media agendas in policy development (Berger, 2001, also see Rogers and Dearing, 1988). Thus, theory of policy agenda-setting asserts that the media draw public attention to significant societal issues and problem; 'this media agenda influences the public's awareness of, and concerns about, such issues; in turn, the public agenda may influence the policy agenda and policy implementation' (Berger, 2001: 94).

The media play a vital role in influencing the public's opinion on issues which gain primacy in the society, thereby constructing policy agenda setting framework (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). 'Policy agenda-setting research suggests that the media influence the transferral of items from media to policy agendas' (Bakir, 2006: 3). The mass media shape policy process by influencing government agencies and key players. Thus, the media are an imperative requisite in informing policy choices, however, the media play a significant role at every stage of decision making especially in cases of immediate crisis or national issues (O'Heffernan, 1991). There are two structural processes as a result of media exposure that influences policy agenda – namely, priming and framing (Porche, 2004, see also Rogers and Dearing, 1988). Priming employs the cognitive psychology process the media uses to construct an idea in a person's or the public's mind by increasing the salience of an issue through semantic pathways or previously acquired information (Porche, 2004). The media uses this process to retrieve and store information (Rogers and Dearing, 1988) in the mind and also prepare its audience or readers for what the media intend to mediate in the future (Porche, 2004). Consequently, priming constructs public attitudes through media agenda-setting by showing or attracting an individual's attention to significant issues (Rogers and Dearing, 1988).

Framing is the method the media use to focus the general public's attention to a particular aspect of an issue, thereby shaping the public's opinion on issues to be discussed and prioritized in the society (Porche, 2004; see also Bakir, 2006). In addition, framing is the

selection of some features of perceived reality and the construction of them to be more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a specific quandary definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and / or treatment recommendation for the item depicted (Oladeinde and Ajibola, 2008). For example, during the BSE (Mad Cow disease) crisis, the media attracted public attention to the government's deceptive and nonchalant concern for public health. This framing was highly discussed and prioritized in the society and it eventually gave way for opposition and critical voices or groups to set the agenda (Hughes et al, 2006).

Literatures on public agenda setting indicates that the media construct public agenda through media exposure, by influencing what is news and who and what is newsworthy (Porche, 2004). The mass media channel their attention to issues that will inform the public on what they should know, think and have feelings about. This hypothesized function of the media does not tell its audience or readers what to think but what to think about (Nwanne, 2006; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Rogers and Dearing, 1988). 'While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it is hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issue' (McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 177).

The policy agenda setting framework constitutes two types of inputs: demand and support. When certain demands by individuals or groups are not met by the authority involved, the outcome is supported either through protest, demonstration or strike action, which then becomes an issue that can assist in elevating the demands to policy agenda status. Notably, not all demands brought forward by these groups are considered issues and not all issues are deemed fit for policy agenda of the governing body or political system. This is because of the amount of resources controlled by different groups and institutions; thus, the media have different ways of assessing the credibility of organisational groups (Bauer et al, 1963 in Rushefsky and Patel, 1998).

The work of Cobb and Elder dealt directly with the policy agenda building process. They assert that 'an issue is a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural

or substantive matters relating to the distribution of positions or resources' (cited in Rushefsky and Patel, 1998: 19). Within the policy domain is the policy community that consist of interest groups (Birkland, 1997), which can be classified into two subheadings: pluralist and elite (Reese, 1991). According to the pluralist approach, power is viewed as directed to many competing groups that struggle with one another to have their preferences and interest placed on the policy agenda thereby establishing political stability. Most studies have criticized the pluralist approach for its failure to examine power explicitly (Rushefsky and Patel, 1998; Reese, 1991). The elite approach asserts that a well organised group of elite (from top-down) dominate the agenda setting process. These elite groups consist of the most powerful individuals in the society which always gets their issues placed on government policy agenda, and the media is viewed as both supporting and furthering the power of these elite groups (Rushefsky and Patel, 1998; Reese, 1991; Birkland, 1997).

According to Cobb and Elder, issues get on the policy agenda through internal and external triggering devices. Internal triggering devices include unpredicted human occurrences, natural disaster, bias or imbalances in the allocation of resources, ecological and technological changes. External triggering devices consist of the act of war, international conflict and advancement in weapon technology. They also identified two types of agenda; first, the systematic agenda which deals with how political communities perceive issues that attract public attention and also involving matters within their legitimate territory of existing government authority. Second, the institutional agenda, which they defined as that set of items explicitly up for the active and serious consideration of authoritative decision-makers' (cited in Rushefsky and Patel, 1998: 19).

Unfortunately, the agenda-setting literature has been criticized for its obvious inconsistencies and unsound findings (Rogers and Dearing, 1988; Swanson, 1988 in Whitney, 1991). This is because only a few agenda-setting scholars have involved real world indicators in their analysis. Hence, the researcher has extracted **two routes** pertinent to this study from the agenda-setting literature to avoid spurious variables that might confuse the relationship between the media agenda- advancing toward- public

agenda-advancing toward- policy agenda (Rogers and Dearing, 1988; also see Ettema et al, study in Whitney, 1991). The **first route** examines how the public agenda, once set by, or echoed by (Rogers and Dearing, 1988), media exposure influence policy implementation or the agenda of decision makers (Berger, 2001; Bakir, 2006). Such influence of the media can be discerned into **three** categories. **First**, by disseminating information, the public's agenda is influenced by the media, in turn influencing policy (Porche, 2004). **Second**, by exposing and analyzing issues, the media can help create policy image for the public. **Third**, through media coverage, 'organised interests can channel their policy demands to wider constituencies, so increasing public pressure on policy by driving public concerns' (for citations, see Bakir, 2006: 3).

The **second route** identified, examines how media coverage influences policy by shaping elite decision makers' perception of public opinion (Rogers and Dearing, 1988; Whitney, 1991; Bakir, 2006). While these routes and causes of media influence are pertinent to this study, the policy agenda literature offers little research into the media's role in setting policy agendas in risk issues, which reflects a pattern across other fields of study and not just those of risk – due to the difficulties, time and inaccessibility of policy making processes and complications in demonstrating causality. Hence, this study turns to the social amplification of risk framework (SARF) to grasp how public policy is impacted by risk communication (Bakir, 2006: 2008).

#### **2.4.2 SOCIAL AMPLIFICATION OF RISK FRAMEWORK (SARF)**

In recent years, concern over risk communication has become increasingly prevalent, drawing a global constituency of interest within government and industry alike (Horlick-Jones et al, 2003). This is due to the rapid change in global economy, with an enormous expansion in contemporary media and communication technologies, and significant socio-cultural fragmentation (Petts et al, 2001). According to commentators, combinations of these transformations have produced politicization of risk issues (Beck, 1992), the appearance of active consumer and a new tendency for moral panics (Horlick-Jones et al, 2003; Petts et al, 2001). Risk communication emerged as a prerequisite to



bridge the gap between scientific / expert assessments of risk and measures to reduce risk to unconvinced lay audience (Frewer, 2000 in Bakir, 2006). Research in the field of risk communication has recently identified the apparent failure of the paternalistic top-down communication activities (Petts et al, 2001), emerging from public cynicism towards the intentions of scientific advisor, industrialist, politicians, and regulators (Frewer, 2004 cited in Bakir, 2006). Consequently, risk communication aims to understand how risk knowledge is apparently exchanged within and between individuals in the society (Petts, et al, 2001): one outcome of this research is the SARF (Bakir, 2006).

Social amplification of risk framework (SARF) was formulated in 1988 by Kasperson and colleagues from Clark University (Kasperson et al, 2003), as a response to the disjunctures between the different parts of risk research, to rectify the deficit of our knowledge about the social process that can mediate between a risk and its outcomes (Breakwell et al, 2001). Thus, the SARF framework describes the different dynamic of social process underlying risk response and perception embedded within risk amplification and attenuation. **Risk amplification** can be defined as the various processes that leads to hazards and events which experts assess as relatively low in risk but triggers socio-political activities and become a focus of interest and concern within a society, while **risk attenuation** can be described as hazards and events which experts assess as relatively high in risk but receive comparatively little attention from society (Petts et al, 2001; Kasperson et al, 2003). Examples of major hazards subject to social attenuation of risk include smoking, exposure to radon gas or automobile accident (Kasperson et al, 2003). On the other hand, social amplification of risk perceptions includes Bhopal (1984), Chernobyl (1986), and the BSE outbreak (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006).

The social amplification of risk framework (SARF) starts from the concept of a risk-related occurrence (Petts et al, 2001). These events pertaining to risks interact with a wide range of psychological, social, institutional and cultural processes which create interpretations that may heighten or attenuate risk perception and its manageability, thereby shaping risk behaviour (Murdock et al, 2003; Renn et al, 1992 in Breakwell et al, 2001). The main thrust of SARF is that social and economic consequences of a risk

occurrence are determined by social and cultural processes rather than the physical harms of the event (such as the numbers of individuals and locations affected) (Barnett and Breakwell, 2003). Kasperson et al., argue that these socio-cultural processes (receiver, interpreter, sender) of risk signals are transformed as they filter through stations of amplification (such as scientific institutions, politicians and government agency, media and pressure groups), leading to social intensification or attenuation of risk, sometimes generating ripple effects of secondary and tertiary consequences (such as stigmatisation, demands for regulatory action, loss of trust in authority) spreading far beyond the initial impact of the risk events (1988; 2003) and may even impinge upon previously unrelated institutions and technologies (Petts et al, 2001).

The SARF specifies four major mechanisms of risk amplification: signal value, heuristics and value, stigmatization and social group relationship (Kasperson et al, 1988 cited in Bakir, 2006). Renn, Burns, Kasperson et al., suggest that signal value serves as a warning message for society about the seriousness or manageability of the risk (1992 in Kasperson et al, 2003; see also Bakir, 2006: 4). Stigmatization is the adverse public perception of an activity, product, technologies, places that are perceived to be excessively dangerous and thus, leads to avoidance or pessimistic behaviours (Kasperson et al, 2003). Heuristics and values are used by individuals to assess risk and shape responses to manage the difficulty of risk daily. However, as risk issues penetrate the schema of social and political groups, the nature of their social group relationships influence risk permutation and member responses (Bakir, 2006: 4). SARF is of paramount interest and concern for policy makers because of its integrated approach to risk communication that cuts across theoretical and disciplinary boundaries (Pidgeon, 1999 in Breakwell et al, 2001; Horlick-Jones et al., 2003).

Social amplification of risk framework (SARF) has proved influential in the risk literature and has assisted to initiate research activity; however, serious criticisms have emerged (Holick-Jones et al, 2003). Murdock et al., argue that the framework does not give a satisfactory account of risk communication and individual responses in modern democracies (2003). Similar criticism has been aired in connection with media response

to risk issues; they argued that SARF fails to consider the diversity of the media and its unique role as a symbolic information system. That is, lay public are not just receiver but rather their active voice and participation are vital in sense making dynamics (Horlick-Jones et al, 2003). Hence, Rayner (1988) asserts that the framework does not give a full account of the complexity and richness of individual risk-related behaviour (cited in Horlick-Jones et al, 2003). Thus, this research draws upon rather different intellectual roots, but distinct work, which has developed over a period of time. Specifically, the pragmatic approach to assessing SARF brings fresh insight in understanding the consequences of a risk-related event (Horlick-Jones et al, 2003) and also integration of insights drawn from studies of policy process and socio-political and economic analysis (Gowda, 2003). However, it is worth noting here that the media are only one of the social amplification stations mentioned in the SARF. It would therefore seem important in evaluating the utility of the framework in Nigeria's Niger Delta region to consider the relationships between all of the levels of data that SARF identifies; the physical characteristics of a risk event, media coverage, public reaction, risk perception and societal impact (Burns et al, 1993 cited in Breakwells et al, 2001; Horlick-Jones et al, 2003).

#### **2.4.3 THE MEDIA AND RISK**

Beck acknowledges that we now live in an era characterized by uncertainty which he termed risk society - an era obsessed with risk of ecological and natural disaster, accidents, technological errors, professional miscalculation and scientific uncertainty. Modern uncertainty has triggered public and political debate over defining risk as a concept (1995b: 5-7, see also Eldridge and Reilly, 2003) and the mass media are seen to play a key role in social transformation and channel through which risk-related events are mediated (Lundgren and McMakin, 2004). There is prevalent belief amongst sectors of risk community, industry, experts and government agencies that the media exert significant influence on people's responses to risk. Sociological approaches suggest that the media facilitates the awareness of public risk consciousness. In spite of public reliance on the media for risk information, it soon became clear that public trust in media

started to decline (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006), as ‘the media are nearly almost perceived as negative influences in this regard, allegedly prone to dramatisation, distortion, sensationalism, misrepresentation, attention seeking’ and anti-science and technology (Petts et al, 2001: 2). Also, scientists often complain that the media exaggerate risks that pose small danger to the public and discard those that do (Hughes et al, 2006).

Media reporting has been depicted to shift from emphasising risk in favour of offering reassurance to the public, although some commentators have argued that it is in crisis scenarios that this operates (Eldridge and Reilly, 2003; Sandman, 1997 in Petts et al, 2001). The concept of media as amplifiers has proven to be complex; authors of SARF have themselves arrived at inconclusive evidence on the media as amplifiers. Several studies on risk occurrences for example, the 128 quantitative hazard event study conducted by Clark University and Decision research and qualitative study of six risk events carried out by Kasperson and colleagues, indicated that continuous and heavy media coverage did not of itself trigger risk amplification or considerable secondary effects, but rather downplayed the risks (Kasperson et al, 2003; Kasperson 1992; Petts et al, 2001). However, the studies were centred on hypothetical rather than actual occurrences and failed to address factors that influences individuals’ responses to real-life risks (Petts et al, 2001).

However, studies on real life experience on risk events, for example bacterium yersinia pestis in Surat Indian, indicated that the media and other social network amplified the risk events and it led to secondary effects, while another risk event like the arsenic water pollution received comparatively low media coverage and the number of affected people and the scope of the infected area continued to rise over the time (Susarla, 2003). Thus, it is clear that media coverage on risk is selective, even if the risk event is newsworthy, hence news items may amplify or attenuate risk events because media selectivity on risk issues has real world impacts (Eldridge and Reilly, 2003; Susarla, 2003). The mass media are unevenly attracted to risk because the mainstream news media are poorly constructed to sustain attention of any specific future threat (Eldridge and Reilly, 2003). When a risk

is still hypothetical and there are no proven casualties to interview, a story will be less attractive to news media. This is because journalists are interested in the news of the day. However, risk reporting is influenced by the pace at which a threat unfolds and how evidence is marshalled and procedures launched as news events. Thus, the media will focus on events which involve many deaths rather than one that have a growing effect over a long time (Hughes et al, 2006: 255).

Eldridge and Reilly gave three main reasons why the media do not encourage sustained risk coverage. First, risk is uncertain and scientific evidence is often inconclusive. Nonetheless, it is controversy, new and definitive findings that attracts the media rather than scientific uncertainty. Second, a risk related event may not be attractive or be of interest to journalist unless government or other official agencies implement policy and the precautionary principle. Third, risk is a concept based on future prediction and this is in conflict with the media news agenda that emphasizes the events of the day [fresh news story]. The media tend to ignore hypothetical and distant risk, even when it is a potential threat until the dangers are manifest in some ways. 'The news media are better at retrospective than prospective reporting of risk, and retrospective risk reporting is inherently limited' (2003: 140; for more on news story selection see Tuchman, 1978, Gans, 1979; Allan, 1999; Hausman, 1990 and Franklin et al, 2005).

One route pertinent to this study is the model of risk communication based on Bourdieu's (1998) metaphor of public communication as a field of play and competition (cited in Petts et al, 2001). This model is grounded in the metaphor of public communication where political organisations and public agencies concerned with risk are caught up in a continual challenge with other key stakeholders such as pressure groups and campaigning institutions, expert communities, opposition parties and corporations – to key in their preferred opinion and issues and to rally support at the level of both public views and actual everyday actions. This model introduces interactive model that brings major stakeholders concerned with risk to continually launch initiatives and respond to public and each other's move. Thus, they communicate with the public (lay people) to allay fear of risk event via different means of communication - internet, poster campaign, mail

shots, however, for general purpose to reach a wider audience, these stakeholders 'enter into exchange relations with journalists, bargaining information, images or announcements against publicity' (Petts et al, 2001: 3). Consequently, the media remains essential to the political process and the engine room where battles over defining, identification and risk management are fought out (Bourdieu, 1998, Eldridge, 1999 cited in Petts et al, 2001).

Although, the model of risk communication has succeeded in transforming audience from active to interactive (Hughes et al, 2006), one major challenge faced by risk communicators with this model is the rise of internet weblogs or blogs (Ashlin and Ladle, 2006). Blogospheres create a communication avenue where information and views are exchanged, transformed and reworked with astonishing swiftness across international boundaries and time zones (Ladle, 2006). The growing ubiquity of the internet or blogosphere 'shifts the balance between expert knowledge, everyday experience, and personal testimony and increases opportunities for public participation in debates around shared risks' (Hughes et al, 2006: 266). Despite this prevalent embrace of weblogs, many scientists are not embracing it, probably because they are scared of intellectual property theft (Ashlin and Ladle, 2006). However, unlike the traditional news media, the content flow and different forms of uses are not easy to control because no gatekeepers, reviewers or authority exist to avert misrepresentation of a risk related event and also to filter the influence of uninformed, misleading and misguided weblogs or websites. Since it is difficult for experts or scientist to spot and correct errors in blogging discourse, the increasing popularity of blogs and related websites are viewed with considerable suspicion by both experts and lay public (Ashlin and Ladle, 2006; Ladle, 2006). Despite these challenges legitimate institutions - the media, government agencies, scientific communities, professional institutions, social movement and campaigning groups - source the internet to enhance feedback 'as the basis for campaigns tailored to popular misconception and preoccupation' (Hughes et al, 2006: 266).

#### **2.4.4 INSTITUTIONAL CREDIBILITY AND SOCIAL TRUST**

From early to late modernity issues of trust and credibility have been raised in the risk field, especially the role of trust in people's reactions to environmental and technological threats from both the policy communities and academic (Pidgeon et al, 2006). Several research projects conducted in United Kingdom (UK) revealed that public trust in expert, politicians, science and media has declined (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006; Covello et al, 1989; Bakir and Barlow, 2007, Worcester, 2003; for polls on trust see, Trust in Media Poll conducted by BBC, Reuters, and Media Centre, 2006; Most trusted profession in MORI polls, 2007). Generating trust has become a priority for policy makers and researchers in the field of risk management, in order to gain public acceptance of policy decisions (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). However, policy makers have become aware that the masses are key players in the recent risk controversies and that (dis)trust may play an important part of this (House of Lords, 2000; Cabinet Office, 2002 in Pidgeon et al, 2003). According to Petts et al., (2001), trust is recognised as an underpinning influence of risk perceptions and reactions to communication and information. Thus, abstract systems depend upon trust, hence, active trust must be won and maintained (Giddens, 1990, 1994b; Bakir and Barlow, 2007; see also Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006).

Beck (1992: 2) in his writing acknowledged that in reflexive modernization, societies are becoming more critical of the activities of organised irresponsibility of the industrial era that is systematically accompanied by that of risk, which have led to the production of modern threats (nuclear waste, genetically modified food, cloning and pollutant). Accordingly, individuals start to lose trust trying to measure what is rational and safe, knowing full well that in the industrial phase, risks are industrially manufactured, scientifically justifiable and economically externalised as companies do not pay for their pollution (Bakir and Barlow, 2007). For example, it is on record that oil companies like Shell and BP have a bad reputation of handling indigenous cultures and local people in their search for oil (Langford et al, 1999). Consequently, issues of trust and credibility of experts, pressure groups, lobbies and government are continuously raised (Bakir and Barlow, 2007). This is because more recently there has been much anxiety about

technological innovation which has amplified lay people's concerns and responses to risk messages and their unwillingness to accept proposals for activities perceived as risky; mobilized social and political protests to avert risks; led to lay questioning of the competence and credibility of the decisions of authorities and risk regulators, and supports their selective use of information sources (Kasperson et al, 1992; Petts, 1992; 1995; 1998; Flynn et al, 1993; Lofstedt and Horlick-Jones, 1999 cited in Petts et al, 2001).

'Trust presupposes awareness of risk, offering reliability in the face of contingent outcomes and thereby serving to minimize concern about possible risk' (Lupton, 1999: 78). Giddens asserts that trust and risk are linked, noting that in the face of contingent outcomes trust serves to reduce the dangers to which specific types of activity are subject: 'What is seen as 'acceptable' risk – the – minimising of danger – varies in different contexts, but is usually central in sustaining trust' (Giddens, 1990: 35). Trust, therefore, may be considered as a means of dealing with risk in a psychological manner that would otherwise lead to anxiety, dread feelings or discourage action. In everyday routine, most individuals find risk issues too complex and wearisome to analyse or / and differences between expert knowledges will be so great that individuals rely on fate or trust in disembedding mechanisms, which Giddens terms pragmatic acceptance that relieves the weight of anxiety (Giddens, 1990: 133). However, if expert knowledges fall short of risk issues, the consequences extend far beyond the local context. Dependence upon world expert system is characterized by uncertainty. Consequently, the lay publics' are more sceptical of expert systems requiring of them that they win their trust. 'They are also turning back towards face-to-face relationships in the attempt to 're-embed' their trust in those whom they know personally', dependent on the sorts of trust relationship that exist based on various sorts of risk and intimate other (Lupton, 1999: 77). 'The disembedded characteristics of abstract systems mean constant interaction with 'absent others' – people one never sees or meets but whose actions directly affect features of one own life' (Giddens, 1994: 89). Lack of trust makes it impossible for people to engage in the leap of faith that is required of them in dealing with scientific knowledge or expert systems of which they themselves have minor understanding or scientific / technical knowledge



because they lack the technical know how / training on these risk issues (Giddens, 1990). Therefore, trust exist between knowledge and ignorance, from this perspective the function of trust can be defined as solving the problem of limited knowledge by minimizing its difficulties (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). In late modernity, dependence on widespread expert systems over local knowledges, and upon symbolic tokens such as money, trust remains an essential part of life (Giddens, 1994).

A large number of psychometric surveys, which have attempted to find out which abstract system the public (dis)trust to mediate accurate information, have faced criticism. This is because they present individuals with a list of institutions and particularly ask them which ones they trust the most. Thus, this approach formulates assumptions about lay people's perceptions and 'sometimes offers people rather false comparisons – for example, do you trust your family more than a politician?' However, psychometric studies have failed to identify how the public address / talk about trust and why some organisations are more trusted than others (Petts et al, 2001: 10). For example, in the ten country poll conducted by BBC, Reuters and the Media Centre, their research findings revealed that Nigerians trust their media more than the government. Arguably, such a finding will not be particularly relevant in risk-related events because the question was geared towards institutions rather than risk associated with technological and environmental degradation in the country (see Trust in Media poll, 2006). There are relevant sections of trust studies which are pertinent to this research, but, need detailed understanding and however, several commentators have agreed that it also needs further research because of unresolved key debates that surround it. However, this research is geared towards the direction of the unresolved debates to unveil trust issues as follows- **First**, the significance of trust with regards to a specific risk issue. **Second**, 'the relationship between trust, risk judgement and the acceptability of a risk'. **Third**, the problems which influence how a message is received from a particular source, rather than assumptions of lay-people (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006: 63; for more insight also see Petts et al, 2001; Pidgeon et al, 2006).

#### **2.4.5 MEDIA, TRUST AND PUBLIC SPHERE**

The concept of public sphere is centred on the relationships that exist between the media, state, the public and business institutions. Inexorably, as in the case of all relationships, this involves the issue of trust (Boyd-Barrett, 1995 in Bakir and Barlow, 2007). Through the twentieth century, the impact of mass media upon civic engagement and practice spawned several academic and public debates. Scholars argue that instead of the mass media to enable active citizenship as it was in the late eighteenth century, the modern mass media of the twentieth century threatened to destabilize the public sphere and democracy (Calhoun, 1992; Butsch, 2007). This debate cuts across the best known contemporary depiction of the media and public sphere – the historical analysis advanced by Jurgen Habermas, whose concept of public sphere triggered prevalent debate (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991; see also Calhoun, 1992). However, critics and advocates alike agree that his concept retain relevance in any modern communication, specifically regarding the media's role in democratic societies (Bakir and Barlow, 2007; Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991).

Habermas traced the evolution of what he termed the 'bourgeois public sphere in Britain, France and Germany from its origins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to its peak in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and through to its subsequent decline in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' (Bakir and Barlow, 2007: 18; also see Calhoun, 1992). From his historical analysis, the early physical and cultural institutions of the public sphere were the salons, coffee houses and press that work to advance a democratic state (Butsch, 2007). However, these institutions were neither controlled by the state, nor were they part of private world, they also differed in size, type, style and topics of discussion. The normal preserve of inequality, private interest, political power and influence were suspended in order to prioritise and debate on questions of state policy and action. Thus, these early institutions created a resuscitated public sphere by acting as a mouth piece for the public, enabling individuals to participate in significant discussion of the state (Habermas, 1964, Stevenson, 2002 in Bakir and Barlow, 2007). However, the underlying principle reinforcing this approach to communication - which aims to bring about trust through sharing knowledge and

reciprocal understanding – ‘can be contrasted with that of its polar opposite, strategic action and instrumental rationality, where communication is goal-oriented and manipulative’ (Garnham, 1992; Dahlgren, 2001 in Bakir and Barlow, 2007: 18).

The public sphere is a concept that is directed to the issues of how and to what extent the mass media can help individuals learn about their environment, create an independent forum for public debate, thereby enabling the formation of public opinion to keep the state in check and also help citizens to reach informed political choices on issues of societal and personal interest (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991). However, the *modus operandi* of commercial mass media in contemporary society is the drive for profit, which conceives media in connection to consumers in a market rather than individuals in a public sphere (Butsch, 2007). Thus, as the media became commercialized it no longer offered access to the citizens for rational-critical debate on issues concerning the state (Garnham, 1992, 1995; Bakir and Barlow, 2007). Consequently, the media have reduced citizens to passive audience observers rather than active, his argument is based on the fact that representatives such as political groups, academic experts, professionals, ordinary citizens, pressure groups, journalists and a centralised electronic media, began to dominate and influence the flow of information and public opinion, which the media use to provide information and surrogate debate for citizens to make decision and vote (Butsch, 2007). Habermas described this process as re-feudalisation of the public sphere (representative publicity), because the essential organisation of the public sphere, media, is controlled by the state and commercial institutions (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991; Calhoun, 1992; Bakir and Barlow, 2007). Thus, ‘the sheer scale of modern media corporations overwhelms the relatively minute institutions of the public sphere, as a skyscraper enshadows a small public park’ (Butsch, 2007: 8). However, as poll data indicated in 2.4.4, trust in media, politician and government is in short supply in the west [although not all], (see MORI polls, 2007; BBC, Reuters and Media Centre, 2006). This indicates that the public sphere is not working; it does not provide detailed reasons for this short supply of trust. Hence, this study turns to Habermas for insight on the decline of public sphere from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Accordingly, the decline in public sphere was as a result of the advancement of popular press and the drive for profit by

media institutions, which eradicated active citizenship as it no longer offered citizens opportunity to partake in rational debate (Calhoun, 1992; see also Bakir and Barlow, 2007).

However, does Habermas' rendition of public sphere in the west concur with that of Africa (Nigeria)? While polls indicate short supply of trust (bias, inaccuracy and distortion) for news media in the west, it also indicates that Nigerians trust their media. However, both the west and Africa indicated low trust for politicians and government (see MORI polls, 2007; BBC, Reuters and Media Centre, 2006). The process of maintaining the public sphere is far from ideal, due to the complex nature of modern societies and the inevitable role the media play in the economic sphere (notably, the field of advertising) to survive (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). To understand why the public sphere is not working, 'we would do well to pay closer attention to the myriad trust relationships sustained between publics, the media and political and economic power-holders' (Bakir and Barlow, 2007: 20).

#### **2.4.6 PRESS FREEDOM, MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA**

The assessment and evaluation of media structure and degree of press freedom in Nigeria depends on different factors, such as the types of media ownership that exist, the political system, the economy, the judiciary, control tactics, media pluralism and democratisation. The Nigerian media structure comprises private and government media ownership, which affect the degree of press freedom that exists at a given time (Uche, 1989 in Agbese, 2006). Broadcast media was solely owned by the government until the establishment of the Nigerian Broadcast Commission (NBC) in 1992 which brought change by deregulating the industry and gave licenses to private individuals to own and operate broadcast media and telecommunications (Musa and Mohammed, 2004; Ogbondah, 2003). Print media is largely owned by private individuals in Nigeria, though federal and state governments own a few newspaper organisations (Olusola, 2008).

In 1996, Nigeria had sixty newspapers and twenty-five news magazines both government and private owned. In addition, there were fifteen television (including cable stations) and fourteen radio stations, all privately owned and thirty-six radio and forty television stations were owned by the government (Musa and Mohammed, 2004). However, the last dispensation of democratic government that took off May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999 under the Obasanjo government created expansion for the mass media, this period witnessed a mushrooming of sorts in the newspaper industry and the proliferation of Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) relay stations which added to the number of public television stations in the country (Olusola, 2008). However, the media (television and radio) landscape in Nigeria is dominated by the federal and state government. Thus, the ratio of government to private broadcast media stations stands at three to one (Musa and Mohammed, 2004).

The type of political system existing in Nigeria at a given time can also determine the degree of press freedom that exist (Agbese, 2006). According to Nwachuku, the type and structure of government that have existed in Nigeria (colonial, military and civilian) enacted laws that restrained press freedom. 'Comparatively, the British colonial administration may appear to have done the least harm, but it set in motion the kinds of repressive press laws existing in Nigeria today' (1998: 2). In most cases, the press is free only when it does not confront top government officials, scholarly articles reveal that Nigerian press have more freedom in democratic regime than they did during military regime (Ogbondah, 1997 in Agbese, 2006). Throughout the twenty-nine years of military regime in Nigeria, each military government constituted several decrees, extra-legal laws and non-legal laws restrictive to press freedom. During this era, journalists were detained, harassed, killed and imprisoned without trial. For example, In 1978, Amakiri Minere Chief Correspondent of the Nigerian observer was beaten and his head shaved during the Gowon military regime, in 1984 Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson of the Guardian were imprisoned for a year under decree 4 during the Buhari military regime and in 1986 the tragic death of Editor-in-Chief of Newswatch magazine Dele Giwa through letter bomb during the Babangida military regime. (Olayiwola, 1991; Agbese, 2006).

Media fared significantly better under the last democratic government headed by Obansajo [1999-2007], a retired army general, than they had during the preceding sixteen years of military regime. However, during the Obansajo administration journalists were not entirely free. The Obansajo government retained repressive practices used by military to suppress journalists, and the media experienced different forms of attack during his leadership such as, assault, detention, confiscation of copies of news publications and injustices meant to suppress the media. Subsequently, the late democratic president Yar'Adua who took over power from Obansajo on May 29, 2007 indicated that he would sign into law the freedom of information bill, which the Obansajo government rejected. In other words, this bill will liberate and give Nigerian citizens, including media, a right of access to public information (IREX, 2007). However, this move by the present government, on the one hand, will create a resuscitated public sphere as citizens can get access to public information through dialogue, debate and discussion, thereby generating trust between the government, media and citizens. On the other, it will give media institutions liberty to report information without restriction or fear of being harmed (Ashong and Udoudo 2008; Olusola, 2008).

The challenge faced by private media ownership under the present democratic government is the exorbitant annual fees charged by National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). 'This situation puts the private stations at a disadvantage as they have to compete with the government-owned stations (that are not subjected to the same payment) in the same market' (Olusola, 2008: 40). Moreover, the licenses of twenty private owned media that could not meet the standard fees set by NBC due to financial difficulties and technical problems were withdrawn (Ogbondah, 2003). This challenge, combined with commercial interest of the private broadcast station has made them ineffective in carrying out their responsibility in a democratic society. They must first thrive as an industry / business before considering public interest and service. However, the twist in Nigerian media is that private broadcast stations have become more dormant leaving the independent press open to personal monopoly for owner's benefit and government-owned media are mere loud speaker and propaganda machines for the government in power (Agbese, 2006; Olusola, 2008). As a result, fairness may always be elusive and this has

serious implications for audience trust. Most media institutions sought for stories that would make more sales rather than stories that deal with risk issues and conflict especially in Niger Delta. For example, Journalists get their information from either government sources or multi national companies on risk related issues in Niger Delta because they are not always on hand to report risk events the way they unfold. Such a situation makes audience lose confidence in media (Ashong and Udoudo 2008).

In addition, the regulatory body (NBC) set by the government can be a form of control to monitor the media. An example is the power given to the commission to licence and revoke the licence of broadcast media station. First, the issuance of licence to private broadcast media by the NBC is under the authority of the minister for information and communication, and the president, who has absolute power to issue broadcast licenses. The loophole here is that the procedure of issuing licences does not align with the stated requirement for broadcast licenses but strictly under the discretion of president. This process is neither fair nor competitive but unclear and not open to public scrutiny as the president does not give reasons for denial and applicants have no recourse to judicial review or appeal. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain on this occasion what consideration come into play before licenses are approved (IREX, 2007). Secondly, the power to revoke broadcast licenses can be used to repress media freedom of expression. One defect of this decree is that the commission can revoke licenses of broadcast stations that do not function in harmony with the code and in the public interest, without specifying 'how to seek redress or to what the public interest is, as in the American Federal Communication Commission. Thus, the decree allows the NBC to provide licenses in perpetuity only to withdraw them at whim' (Nwachuku, 1998: 1).

Private proprietors of broadcast media apply significant control of their institutions. They demand self censorship by their editors for fear of offending government officials, business interest and religious groups. In the public media, self-censorship is also practiced for fear of risking their safety or losing their jobs. Many journalists also confess that they practice self-censorship as a result of pressures from their editors, however, such practice prevent journalists from reporting openly (IREX, 20007; Nwachuku, 1998).

According to an editor in a public broadcast media - Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) in Calabar, situated in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, said: “Journalists and editors, particularly in public media, practice self-censorship under the guise of developmental journalism (non-critical journalism that showcases the positive aspects of national life), NTA and all state-owned broadcast media are culprits. They do so for job security and fear for their lives” (IREX, 2007: Objective 2).

The print media appear to be very distinctive due to private involvement; however, their limitations lie in reaching the masses adequately. This limitation spreads across availability, literacy level, content and the economic situation of the country. The economic status of the country does not always permit low income earners to afford magazines and newspapers. Consequently, the print media is not largely accessible to the rural communities (location and low literacy level) compared to urban areas. This, of course, brings the problem of access, since print media limit production of copies that they can conveniently sell (Olusola, 2008). Most NBC registered media institutions in Nigeria have web sites Nigerians can access, however, internet usage in Nigeria is not largely accessible and this remains a major challenge for both urban and rural communities (IREX, 2007). To this end, Jonathan argues that the press in Nigeria have never been free at any time, he also note that ‘journalism in the country is like a physical war that is influenced by the quest for freedom. Journalists, even in their most peaceful period may not know what may come after them’ (2008: 551).

#### **2.4.7 RISK REPORTING AND THE NIGER-DELTA CRISIS**

Aside media ownership and challenges in Nigeria, it is imperative to look at the risk-related events that triggered the Niger-Delta crisis through the eye of media exposure. There is no doubt that the Niger-Delta crisis has caught media attention both national and international because conflict zones and horrific occurrences are good raw materials for news (Ashong and Udoudo 2008). Research into media’s role and depiction of conflict management and risk reporting such as environmental catastrophe tends to focus on three diverse areas. First, is a distinctive body of research concerned with media coverage and



performance evaluations in risk-related circumstances (e.g. Perez-Lugo, 2004; Vasterman et al 2005 cited in Campbell, 2008; Tobechukwu and Oluwaseun, 2008). Second, definitional contention between competing stakeholders [like environmental pressure groups, oil companies and the government] has also attracted research (e.g. Bakir, 2006). Third, is fiction / documentary films that reflect risk issues. This area has been largely ignored by researchers despite its contribution to public debate (Campbell, 2008).

These research paths in examining mediated-risk reporting offered two main routes – media’s role in disseminating risk knowledge to inform citizens, and in regulating public acceptability towards diverse risks. However, media risk research suggests that these routes lack methodology and research foci, enabling new sense of research directions. Accordingly, with reference to methodology, there is need for continuous, contextual and interpretative analysis of effects of mediated risk at micro and macro level, ‘and more in-depth, comparative studies between different risk types across different media forms and genres’ (Bakir, 2008: 1). Research foci include: the gaps in knowledge within the process of making news and the construction of reality (for overview, see Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979): the features of risks event that make it a risk issue and how these features interrelate with diverse media forms, audience and genre; and the implications it has in audience trust in diverse media and in mass-mediated risk knowledge and experience (Bakir, 2008). However, the aforementioned gaps will be addressed in this study.

Media reporting has its root embedded in theories that emerged from the norms and practice of media functions of gatekeeping and agenda-setting which have been an imperative requisite for media coverage of national and international occurrences (Ekeanyanwu, 2005). First, gatekeeping theory coined by Kurt Lewis in 1951, can best be defined as a set of individuals (editors) who controls the gates or routes through which information passes from the source to the final receiver (Tobechukwu and Oluwaseun, 2008). Media institutions operate within this standard enabling editors at editorial conference to decide which news to transmit, defer, modify or completely discard. However, one major pitfall in this process of news selection that may affect media coverage are factors involved in influencing gatekeeping such as management policy,

preference of the audience, perceived needs, political orientation, ideological perspective, ownership pattern, timing and how risk issues are considered news worthy (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Ekeanyanwu, 2005 in Tobechukwu and Oluwaseun, 2008).

Notably, studies like Huges et al, (2006) and Kitzinger (1999) note that risk reporting guided by journalistic institutional traditions and norms have little relationship to actual threat directions. Risk reporting clustering around major risk occurrences, 'ignoring multi-causal, long-term or hypothetical risks and influenced by commitments to 'balance' and 'truth', both concepts liable to founder against the value-laden rocks of uncertainty when reporting risk' (Bakir, 2008: 2: see also, Perez-Lugo in Campbell 2008). According to Ogunbunmi a journalist interviewed on media performance with regards to Niger-Delta crisis admitted that although the media are reporting the crisis but it is also imperative they draw attention via in-depth and interpretative reporting to the underlying causes [risk issues] of the crisis (Jimoh, 2008: 441). In most circumstances, especially reporting risk issues [like oil spillage or oil pipe explosion] in Niger-Delta, journalist's commitment to 'truth' and 'balance' may not at all parallel actual risk occurrences because most media correspondents are not always on hand to cover risk occurrences the way they have occurred. On such occasions, journalists get their fact-findings and reports from either government sources or multinational companies, and as such, fairness may always be elusive to all parties involved in the incident. Such a situation has serious implication in audience trust in the media (Ashong and Udouo, 2008: 315, see also, Kurfi, 2008).

The second conceptual construct, which aids analysis of media performers in reporting and managing conflict and crisis, is the agenda setting theory (Tobechukwu and Oluwaseun 2008). McComb and Shaw (1972), hypothesize that media emphasis on an issue influence the salience of public and decision makers' attitude. This is because media have the ability to create social amplification and attenuation of risk occurrence, generate moral panic and can frame and construct media, public and policy agendas (Bakir, 2006; Miles and Morse 2007 in Campbell, 2008). The media pre-determine which risk issues are important by focusing on the magnitude, quality and nature of mass mediated risk information. The press has in one way or the other played significant role

in the reportage of conflict in the Niger-Delta, however, research carried out by Ekeanyanwu (2005) revealed that sixty percent of news reporting in Nigeria on crisis management concentrate on personality and lack in-depth analysis; this will not help in crisis / risk situations (Tobechukwu and Oluwaseun, 2008).

The underpinning factor here is that while the media try to set agenda for policy makers through media reporting by drawing attention to the underdevelopment in the Niger-Delta region (Okanume, 2008) the question is, apart from underdevelopment what about the risk issues that bedevil the region daily? Studies suggest that the media's role in setting policy agenda in risk issues is under-explored. However, considering the position of policy-makers and corporate decision-makers to risk management, it is imperative for studies to unpick how political and corporate management react to risk issues raised by or through the media, on behalf of stakeholders. 'Here, questions arise over the role played by established institutions, pressure groups, interest groups and media in strategically mobilizing publics over time to influence policy-making in scientific risk issues' (Bakir, 2008: 4). For instance, in Nigeria, with specific reference to late Ken Saro Wiwa and his movement, they succeeded in mobilizing the public and even attracted international environmental community in their campaign to save the Niger-Delta environment from environmental degradation through the media. Consequently, the question is how did policy and corporate decision makers respond to the protest? And did policy change for their course? For more on policy regarding this issue, see **2.5.5** (Westra, 1998; Idowu, 1999). It is indeed significant to conduct historical and longitudinal studies, as issues are difficult to permanently resolve in policy making. It is, however, particularly revealing that studies which compare media risk surveillance at various time periods indicate that communicative, political and social context are fundamental in understanding risk reporting (Bakir, 2006; Palfreman, 2006; Bakir, 2008).

## **2.5 RISK ISSUES, STAKEHOLDERS, OIL COMPANIES AND POLICY-MAKERS: NIGERIA'S NIGER-DELTA REGION**

As risk events create public reaction to risk signals from cooperative action, it stimulates pressure and interest group member responses to systematically negotiate risk issues by attempting to influence policy through the media (Kasperson, et al, 2003; Bakir, 2006). To analyze how social groups react and define risk issues when attempting to influence policy, it is significant to first examine the cause and effect of risk occurrences in the Niger-Delta region.

### **2.5.1 RISK ISSUES AND OIL COMPANIES IN NIGER-DELTA**

Research into the activities of multinational oil companies in developing countries, especially in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region, have revealed risk issues emanating from environmental degradation in the area of oil exploitation and exploration. Over the years, risk issues [such as environmental pollution] have dominated global discussion because of its severity to humans and animals (Idowu, 1999; Akpan, 2008). According to Beck, the production of wealth is systematically followed by that of risk as an outcome of modernization. Therefore, individuals in these industrialized societies have to deal with risk on a daily basis (1992: 19; see also Lupton, 1999). In accordance with Beck, It is indeed plausible that the search for crude oil [wealth] has accompanied the risk of environmental degradation and pollution in Nigeria's Niger Delta since oil was first struck in large quantities in Oloibiri, May 1956 (Akpan, 2008). This propelled commercial business activities thereby attracting foreign investors and multinational companies (like Shell, Chevron, Agip, Elf, Texaco and Mobil) into the country (Adedoja, 2007; Ransome-Kuti, 2007). Today, Nigeria is the largest oil producer in Africa and the 11<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. Oil exploration activities in the Niger-Delta has left most oil host communities impoverished due to oil leaks amounting to thousands of oil spilled into the environment, deep sea disposal of poisonous substances and air pollution by constant gas flaring into the atmosphere have left land, air and water unbearable for the inhabitants to cope with (Idris, 2007; Ransome-Kuti, 2007).

The first stage of risk issues associated with environmental pollution and degradation starts from the search for crude oil by the seismic crew of the oil servicing companies (OSC's). Chemicals such as pipe lax, bentonite, EP-20 are used during seismic and pilot drilling or explosive methods at the exploration stage. At the refining stage, effluents and oil waste are often disposed into adjoining land, which are harmful to the flora, fauna and humans in the environment. For example, Bentonite leads to bronchial illness, persene drilliad and soda ash causes shortness of breath, pipe lax if dumped in the environment leads to cancer of the skin and abnormal pains if polluted fruits are eaten and EP-20 kills instantly if taken internally (Omoweh, 1995; Idowu, 1999). The wastes from these chemicals are poorly managed during operations and are disposed untreated directly on land, swamps or pits that are not cased at the top or beneath and therefore overflow into other areas mostly in the rainy seasons (Oji, 2008; Afamefuna, 2008; Omoweh, 1995; 1998). Oil host communities contend that the operation of these multinational oil ventures in particular Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) which is the largest oil operator in the country have had enormous effect on the environment and the indigenes of oil host communities in the Niger-Delta. For instance, high pressure pipes are criss-crossed in the region, passing over not beneath farm land and within feet of people's home. This of course, would be devastating in the occurrence of oil spill as a result of pipeline rupture (Rowell, 1995).

'Oil spills from pipelines and other operations have become endemic and routine, polluting land and water, fishing and farming have been devastated' (Rowell, 1995: 210; see also Afamefuna, 2008). Oil spill on water can be very severe because the depth and speed of pollution are so high and fast that within an average of twenty-four hours, over five communities are affected (Omoweh, 1995). Over the last fifty years, the Niger Delta has experienced 1.5 million tons of crude oil spills from multinational oil ventures (Igbikiowubo, 2006). The Nigerian ministry for environment, housing and urban development recorded two hundred and fifty-three oil spills in 2006, five hundred and eighty-eight oil spills in 2007 and in the first six months of 2008, four hundred and nineteen cases of oil spills have been recorded in the Niger-Delta, totaling one thousand, two hundred and sixty oil spills in two years (Ochayi and Okereke, 2008; Lawal et al,

2008). One of such spill is the Ikarama incident in Bayelsa State which resulted from a ruptured pipeline operated by SPDC in the area. The risk event caused devastating effect to the people of the affected areas, according to Chief Okah, people in Ikarama started experiencing health problems such as respiratory disease, swollen legs, pregnant women experienced premature birth and miscarriages after the spill occurred (Oyadongha, 2008).

However, cases of oil spills are not swiftly tackled as a matter of urgency, for instance, in July 2007 two communities (Osusu and Joukrama) in Rivers State complained of oil spill from SPDC but did not get the attention of the company until February 2008 (Breakfast Show, AIT, Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2008 in Ashong and Udoudo, 2008). Oil spills in most cases lead to severe fire outbreak when pipes are forcibly damaged for example, in 1998 over one thousand people died in fire inferno caused by pipeline vandals in Jesse, Delta State (Campbell, 2001, for more see, BBC News, 2000; 2006). Oil multinationals, in particular SPDC claim losses worth four hundred and nine million naira [approximately two million pounds] daily to sabotage and illegal activities of oil bunkers in the Niger Delta (Ebiri, 2008). Omoweh contends that technical / human error, poor maintenance, sand cut and ruptured oil pipelines accounts for seventy percent of oil spillage in Nigeria's Niger Delta and thirty percent are linked to sabotage (1998).

Gas flaring is another aspect of risk issue associated with environmental pollution brought about by the activities of multinational oil corporations. Flaring natural gas from oil stations as a by-product of crude oil production has become a normal occurrence that dominates the skyline in the Niger Delta. Oil production began in Nigeria's Niger Delta about fifty years ago and so did the practice of ceaseless flaring of Associated Gas (AG) twenty-four hours a day. More Greenhouse gas (GHG) is flared in Nigeria's Niger Delta than anywhere else in the world and this placed Nigeria as the biggest gas flarer in the world. Currently, there are more than hundred gas flaring stations in Nigeria (Afamefuna, 2008; Idris, 2007; Ishisone, 2004; Friends of the Earth, 2004). According to World Bank report, by 2002 gas flaring in Nigeria's Niger Delta had contributed more GHG's to earth's atmosphere than all other oil producing nations in Sub-Saharan Africa combined. As such, flaring natural gas pose severe risk issue to indigenous local communities living

around the gas flares, thus, increasing the risk of disease, food insecurity and tremendous weather damage (Climate Justice Programme, 2005; Friends of the Earth, 2004).

Emissions from combustion Associated Gas (AG) contains widely recognized toxins, such as benzene, nitrogen oxides, dioxins, hydrogen sulphide, xylene, and toluene; which pollute the air and affect the health of local people. Respiratory problem such as asthma and bronchitis, lung disease, heart attack, miscarriage of pregnancies, skin disease and others are some of the reported cases becoming prevalent as a result from exposure to heat from gas flares (Idris, 2007; Janak, 2006; Climate Justice Programme, 2005; Omoweh, 1995). Gas flaring is unfriendly to the environment because it literally destroys vulnerable natural resources and contributes immensely to global climate change. However, gas flaring produces greenhouse gases (GHG's), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and propane as toxic substances are emitted in flares such as burning of fossil fuel which warms up the Earth (Ishisone, 2004; Idris, 2007). Scientific consensus on climate change indicate that the burning of fossil fuel have increased the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere by fifteen percent during the last century and at present temperature is rising by 0.4 percent yearly. However, this process of emitting CO<sub>2</sub> warms the lower atmosphere at high latitude (Paterson, 1996). 'World Bank estimated that about 10 percent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emission comes from flaring. Nigeria gas flaring alone releases 35 millions tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and 12 million tons of CH<sub>4</sub> which has a higher warming potential than CO<sub>2</sub>' (Ishisone, 2004: 4).

Global warming poses danger to Earth and has over the years become a high profile debate in the globe since most part of the world started experiencing rise in sea levels. For example, in Nigeria most areas affected by flooding have major industries located there, like oil companies. Just like any other coastal communities in the Niger Delta region, Bomadi local government in Delta State experience environmental calamity such as severe flooding scourge that bedevil the region as the raining season begins, the flood tide and water level increase (Ofuokwu and Adeoye, 2008). It is indeed plausible that global warming is responsible for the observed rise in sea level. As the Earth warms, glaciers / ice in the arctic region melts and the defrost ice increase the volume of water

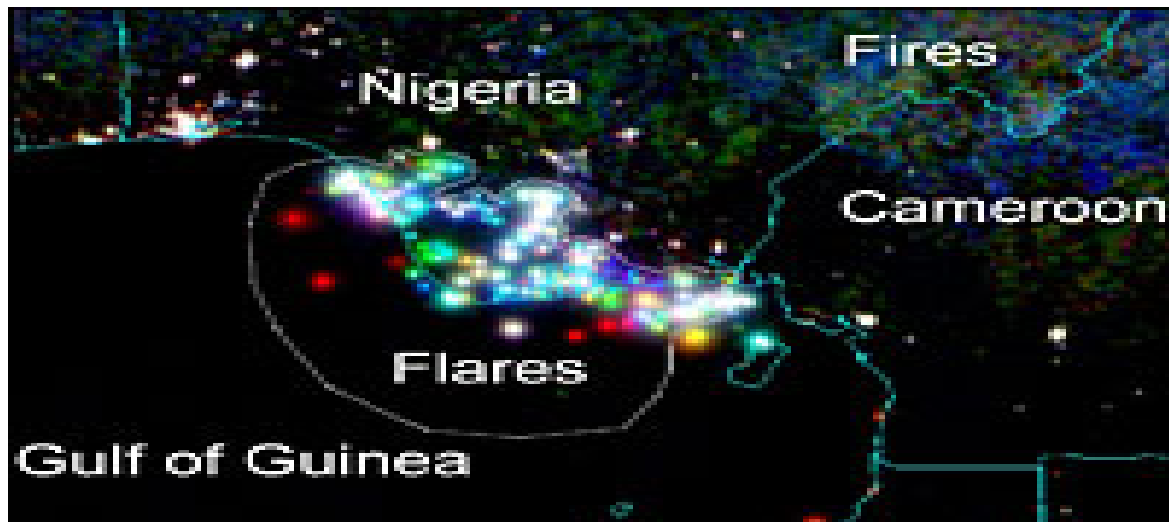
and cause rise in sea level (Pittock, 2005; Dessler and Person, 2006). Although, it is worth noting here that, there is still intense disagreement whether the Earth climate is warming or not and if global climate change is man made or natural, however, this thesis does not look into it, for more on global climate debate see (Singer, 2007; Science Daily, 2008; 2001; Lorenzoni et al, 2005; Dessler and Person, 2006). In addition, gas flaring and oil spillage have harmful effect on eco-system and human beings. According to US government, flaring of natural gas contributes to acid rain which corrodes building materials, destroys vegetation and acidifies lakes, streams and river (Idris, 2007). One crucial point to note is the risk associated with gas flaring on land, that is, any land that have been used for gas flaring is almost permanently unfit for farming due to desiccation of soil; and it usually takes about forty years for the affected land to renew itself (Omoweh, 1998). However, below are graphic illustrations of risk issues associated with environmental pollution by multinational oil companies.

**FIGURE 1**



Smoke from gas flares close to homes in Ebocha – Egbema in Rivers State (Quist – Arcton 2007).



**FIGURE 2**

‘Color composite of the nighttime lights of the Nigeria region from data acquired by the US Air Force Meteorological Satellite program. Data from 1995 is blue, 2000 is green and 2006 is red, the Vector polygon drawn around the gas flares associated with Nigeria are shown in white’ (Quist-Arcton, 2007: 2).

**FIGURE 3**

The aftermath of oil spill – fire explosion that destroyed vegetation at Ibada-Elume, Okpe Local Government Area (LGA) in Delta State (Ekeh, 2001).

The last democratic President Olusegun Obansajo (1999-2007) signed a non-binding agreement with multinational oil companies to end gas flaring in Niger Delta by 2008 (Friends of the Earth, 2004; Climate Justice Programme, 2005). However, at present there is no end in sight. According to Odusina, Nigeria Minister of State for energy and Gas, in 2008 noted that the federal government does not yet have a definite date to put an end to gas flaring as it would be capital intensive. He also made known key projects that would end gas flaring were yet to be completed, one of such project he disclosed was the multi-million-dollar Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) plant being built by Nigerian Independent Petroleum Company (NIPCO). According to Odusina, if the Oil companies executed the necessary route to end gas flaring five years ago, the issue would have ended by now but instead, oil multinationals preferred to pay the fine imposed as penalty for continuous flaring of natural gas rather than to put an end to it (Aliu, 2008).

### **2.5.2 ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION**

The above graphic illustration depicts the prevailing potential hazard [risk] the indigenes, land and aquatic lives of oil host communities in Niger Delta as well as the globe are faced with on a daily basis. However, land and water pollution have eroded indigenes' means of livelihood as majority of individuals living in the Niger Delta engage in agriculture and fishing as a means to life and other business activities. At present, farming in the oil host communities has become an exercise in Futility as the soil is polluted, deprived of its fertility, through environmental degradation (Idowu, 1999). Small scale agricultural trade by locals was almost abandoned because agricultural produce which served as the major source of capital for business fell drastically as farmers were / are faced with poor harvest. This triggered food scarcity and heightened poverty, hardship, misery vulnerability in the land. What also quicken the demise of small scale / large agricultural produce in the Niger Delta region was the 1978 land use

act which stated - the state owns all lands where crude oil is being prospected, mined, transported and stored. As a result, oil multinationals expanded their minefields on the one hand, and there was sharp decrease of family land holdings on the other. Most families were deprived of their farm lands, however, this spelled the end of the road for many farmers; and for many [farmers/agricultural local investors] this watershed years became atrocious (Omoweh, 1995, 1998; Afamefuna, 2008; Akpan, 2008).

Water pollution (through the deep-sea disposal of poisonous substances) and oil spillage, has placed “the oceans’ abundant wealth in jeopardy, causing gross impoverishment of many fishermen and disrupting lives of coastal habitats and fish nursery ground” (Ransome-Kuti, 2007: 3). For example, in 1973, Shell spilled forty thousand barrels of crude oil in Delta State which affected eight hundred fish ponds and two hundred lakes were badly polluted as dead fish and other aquatic organism were found floating on water, in 1981 Chevron and Texaco spilled two billion barrels of crude oil in Rivers State and in the first six months of 2008 about four hundred and eighteen oil spill have been recorded by the Federal Ministry for Environment, Housing and Urban Development in the Niger Delta (Ochayi and Okereke, 2008; Omoweh, 1998). Coastal fishing communities in the Niger Delta are hit by poor catch; as a result, the scarcity of fish remains persistent, hence its prices became very high. The hike in fish price spells inflation and only few families can afford it as majority of indigene’s sources of income specifically farming and tapping are almost impaired. The effect of environmental degradation has made many redundant; not just farmers, fishermen and other economic activities (like tapping rubber and sale of sharp sand) but also traditional health care system that depends on herbs for treatment (Omoweh, 1998).

### **2.5.3 ENVIRONMENTAL LAW, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE NIGER DELTA**

Environment is the core of mankind’s existence on earth; arguably, anything that affects it inevitably affects the quality of human life. In this sense, linking the quality of human life to environment, the United Nation at the Stockholm Conference on Environment sought new routes to enshrine and enforce international protection of the human

environment. However, based on the foregoing, it is essential for the well being and continuous existence of mankind, that environmental laws and regulations must be adhered to, not only through legislations but most importantly through the enforcement of such laws (Stockholm Conference, 1972). Linking the concern for human centrality with sustainable development (Rio Conference, 1992), the 1972 Stockholm Conference declared that mankind has a fundamental right to freedom, right to dignity that permits adequate conditions of life in an environment of quality, right to equality and well being (Stockholm Conference, 1972). It is indeed evident that these laws have gone a long way to curb activities affecting the environment such as, the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, conservation of rain forest and concern over nuclear weapons proliferation to ensure human's continuous existence, which can be described as human's right to life (New York Conference, 1973; Markandya and Halsnaes, 2002). Advocates of environmental protection argue that the inherent value and ethical consideration of animals are also a foundation for international protection of the environment since animals depends on it for their own survival and existence (Rio Conference, 1992).

State responsibility under international environmental law can be seen in the imposition of state obligation by the 1972 Stockholm Conference, which states that – states must not only prevent activities that would affect neighbouring states but also ensure its citizens have the right to a healthy environment. That is, with regards to exploring natural resources, states must exercise due diligence (Stockholm Conference, 1972), to ensure that its activities do not impact negatively on the environment of neighbouring states and its citizens (Rosenne, 1991; Crawford, 2002). Accordingly, a breach in the provision of the treaty or non observance by the state would be seen by international community as an abuse of sovereignty (Science Direct, 2004) and the state will be held responsible not only for their acts or failure to act with respect to their responsibility to protect their environment under international law, also for the activities of private institutions like multinational oil corporations, whose activities within the state territory have serious implication for the environment and also affect the citizens adversely (Atsegbua, 2001; Weiss, 1992). The reason for holding the state accountable for environmental degradation and pollution by private institutions like multinational oil companies, is due to the

principle of state sovereignty; that is, each state has the decisive power to control what happens in its territory and should be able to design and enforce laws regulating its nationals and legal persons within its territory (Nollkaemper, 2006).

The negligence of a state to implement its obligation under a specific international or state law or its refusal or omission to enforce such laws to control the activities of third parties whose operations are hazardous could result in environmental degradation. Omission or refusal to enforce such laws by state on the one hand and violation of environmental law by third party on the other, become an act of human rights violation; when a degraded environment occurs with serious health consequences for a particular group of people or a disruption of a way of life (Lee, 2000). In 2001, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' right used this link to hold Nigerian government responsible in the Ogoni case, when the state failed to regulate the activities of the oil multinationals in Ogoni land that led to environmental degradation. However, in relation to environmental degradation, violation of fundamental human rights can be seen from two perspectives. The first is when a state does not regulate its acts or activities of third party within its territory and eventually leads to environmental pollution affecting the individuals' right to life. Second is violation of international obligation for example, the responsibility of the state parties under the 1972 Stockholm Conference to ensure a safe and healthy environment for its citizens (Stockholm Conference, 1972; Lee, 2000; for citation see, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Romania chapter, 2000; Committee on the Rights of a Child (CRC) Jordan - UNICEF, 2000). The other side of fundamental human rights violation in response to environmental pollution are – right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, freedom from torture and other physical abuses, self determination, right to life, right to adequate standard of living (Idowu, 1999). The human rights violations and environmental conflicts in the Niger Delta have been known to be mainly executed by the state and oil multinationals in the region. For example, the killings and destruction of oil host communities like – Odi massacre (2000), Ogoni genocide (1995), the Opia and Ikiyan killings (1999), Yenagoa killing (1998) (Okaba, 2004; also see Human Right Watch, 2002). In summary, the state is held accountable for any act deemed harmful which can

be connected to its violation of responsibility under domestic or international law resulting from action or omission by the government of the state or any political subdivision of the state (United Nation, 2005).

Thus, for enforcement of environmental protection laws to be effective, it must be routine, predictable and reasonably resourced; however, this presents a strong challenge especially for the developing countries that have always cited economic circumstances as an excuse for not carrying out their responsibilities under environmental protection laws they are party to (Robinson, 2003). Developing countries depend on exploitation of their natural resources to generate national income and since they lack the technical know how to execute these projects themselves, they are at the mercy of these multinational oil companies who sometimes in carrying out their operation do not abide by domestic or international standards of environmental protection law (Bodansky et al, 2007). Enforcement of environmental protection law is seen as more of a national function because they are enacted through domestic regimes of civil, administrative and criminal sub regimes. In addition, several agreements signed by state parties in numerous multilateral environmental treaties are not self executing but would require endorsement by the state legislative body to give it the obligatory domestic effect. Since most environmental protection laws are passed through procedures of domestic legislative arm of government, the effectiveness of the implementation of these laws can only be measured by the potency of a state rule of law, its economic capability and the uprightness of its administrative regime (Robinson, 2003).

Nigeria as a sovereign independent state has enacted environmental laws to regulate and provide sanctions for violations of set standards for damage caused by pollution. However, these environmental laws are numerous; hence, this study will be limited to only those laws addressing the issues of pollution triggered by activities of multinational oil companies together with the Nigerian government (Idowu, 1999). The first of these laws to be looked at, but in no particular order of importance is the Petroleum Act 1969 which gave government total control and ownership of all petroleum in, under or upon any land (Petroleum Act, 1990). This Act has led to the promulgation of petroleum

regulations such as: Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations, Minerals oil (safety) Regulations, Petroleum regulations and others. However, these regulations were put in place to monitor and prescribe the manner by which the holders of petroleum licences are to operate within the set standards (Ojo and Gaskiya, 2003). The Petroleum Act of 1969 did not concentrate on pollution in its terms and condition as an item to be controlled, rather, what the Act does is to empower the minister of petroleum to implement decrees for the prevention of pollution. The law may not be effective since the power so vested is discretionary. To support the Petroleum Act, the Regulation 25, part IV of the Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations 1969 was designed to provide terms and conditions to prevent pollution arising from oil exploration activities, which states that:

‘the licensee or lessee shall adopt all practical precautions to prevent the pollution of inland waterways, rivers, water courses, the territorial waters of Nigeria, of the high seas by oil, mud or other fluids or substances which might contaminate the water, banks or shorelines or which might cause harm or destruction to freshwater or marine life, and where any such pollution occurs or has occurred, shall take prompt steps to control and if possible, end it’ (Idowu, 1999: 173).

Critics alike argue that the term practical precaution is an open-textured phrase capable of subjective interpretation. Thus, they recommended solution to tighten the loop hole in this provision, which suggest review of the Act and the implementation of a stricter, more comprehensive legislation targeted at tackling the challenges of oil pollution (Ojo and Gaskiya, 2003).

In 1991, the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) issued guidelines to monitor and direct pollution resulting from exploration and production companies. These guidelines explicitly proscribe direct or indirect discharge of waste into swamps, coastal or offshore waters, any pit on land other than a temporary holding pit or a landfill, floodplains or upland valley and any waters (fresh or reservoir). These guidelines needs to be re-

examined as oil companies and government are very much unwilling to comply because it is cost effective to abstain from such laws (Environmental Guidelines, 1991; Mandy, 1999; for more on effluents disposal in restricted areas see, Ayotamuno, 1993). Similar to Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) guidelines, although, sometimes overlapping and in some cases differing is the 1988 Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) Act (Decree No. 58 of 1988) which vested the power to issue standards for air, land and water quality within the federal territory and also regulate environmental standards in the oil and other industries (Mandy, 1999; Idowu, 1999). The Associated Gas (Re-injection) Act of 1979 contain provisions which regulate the operation and conservation of natural gas by prescribing penalties such as forfeiture of oil prospecting license or concessions granted in a particular oil mining field(s) in a case of breach (Idowu, 1999). While the aim of the act is highly praiseworthy, in reality gas flaring is prevalent in the oil producing communities and there is no end in sight according to Odusina the minister for State and Energy in 2008 (Aliu, 2008). The Oil Pipeline Act 1956 requires a holder of a pipeline license to pay compensation to any individual who suffers damage from oil activities such as oil spills. However, in 1969 after the promulgation of the Petroleum Act more comprehensive provisions were made in respect of adequate and fair compensation for damage from oil activities. The Petroleum Act states that: ‘the holder of an oil exploration license, oil prospecting license or oil mining lease shall, in addition to any liability for compensation to which he may be subject under any other provision of the Decree, be liable to pay fair and adequate compensation for the disturbance of surface or other rights to any person who owns or is in lawful occupation of the licensed or leased lands’. While the law states citizens’ right to compensation for damage, however, there is no comprehensive legislation dealing with the issue of compensation (Frynas, 2000: 94).

#### **2.5.4 THE RISE OF INTEREST / PRESSURE GROUPS**

The oil host communities were left with no option than to fight for life. In addition, they saw the need to form themselves into community based organisations (Idowu, 1999). The first clarion call for the exit of oil multinationals was initiated and championed by Francis



Okpuzio (1974 – 1980s) in Isoko, Delta State; his campaign lacked an umbrella organisation, limited by education and operated with only a handful of youths. However, the modus operandi of his protest was occasioned by blocking of shell access roads, seizure of oil servicing company's tools and holding its workers hostage. All these did not hold much ground because there were no spontaneous reactions and in most cases, agitations did not last for two weeks and thereafter, oil activities were resumed. Although, the Isoko Youth Movement (IYM) was popular in the protest against oil multinationals notably Shell, however, its support base was local (Omoweh, 1998). By 1990, indigenes of the Niger Delta from various ethnic groups had begun to protest openly against oil multinationals and their activities (Rowell, 1995). The popular protest took two dimensions – peaceful and violent. The peaceful agitation took the form of raising / carrying placards expressing their demands when ever government officials visited the region. Most of the placards read: 'Shell must go' or 'protect our environment' although they got empty promises but at least they made their views known. The violent protest on the other hand, involved disruption of oil companies' activities, like production, transportation and storage; however, the violent protest took three main forms. First, solidarity with other oil producing communities in the Niger Delta; Second, proxy agitation by attacking contracting companies to oil multinationals, like OSC's; Third, political agitation to restore the unevenness in the country (Omoweh, 1995: 137).

At present the fronts for survival in the Niger Delta region are indeed many, the popular ones are: the Niger Delta Vigilante Movement (NDVM), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Coalition for Militant Action in Niger Delta (COMA), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Chikoko Movement, however, not fewer than fifty such fronts are said to presently exist in the region (Akpan, 2008: 307; see also Alabrah, 2007). These splinter fronts / movements were borne out of frustration, age-long poverty, environmental degradation and pollution, which have infuriated indigenes of the Niger Delta region and make them act like people pushed to the wall in extreme anxiety, violently many times, to draw attention to the prevailing conditions in the region. However, 'the multiplicity of fronts translates into a multiplicity

of agendas, some of them shallow and vaguely articulated as well as inter-militia violence' (Akpan, 2008: 307). Of these movements and splinter fronts, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was one of the first organised movements to emerge in 1990 with a clear view and able to articulate its agenda – social justice and environmental protection. Their modes of operations were through peaceful demonstration; one of such was in 1993 that attracted three hundred thousand Ogoni indigenes and protest abroad to attract the international community. However, it is important to note at this juncture that these splinter fronts and movements emerged in the Niger Delta following the advent of MOSOP and the killing of its leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others by the late Abacha junta in 1995. The death of Saro Wiwa could be said to be the turning point in politics in the Niger Delta (Niger Delta Crisis, 2000; Rowell, 1995).

Notably, the initial peaceful protest by the inhabitants of the oil host communities was as a result of neglect, underdevelopment, violation of political and civil rights and environmental pollution in response to the activities of oil multinationals, before its subsequent motive of using militia violence by some movements and fronts, which has made the Niger Delta become a hot bed of self expression and preservation (Akpan, 2008; Adedoja, 2007; Africa Action, 1999). The emergence of some splinter fronts and movements with shallow and vague articulated agenda metamorphosed into surge in militancy, kidnapping of expatriates / wealthy indigenes for ransom, inter-militia violence, pipeline vandalisation and cult clashes which has exacerbated the tempo of violent agitations and restiveness in the region (Adedoja, 2007). 'The level of criminality and the publicity that attends every act of violence tend to project struggles for the betterment of conditions in the region from the point of militancy' (Akpan, 2008: 307). Overtime, the altruism that was initially exhibited by splinter groups / militant movement gave way to self serving motives and lining their wallets with ransom money for example, close to a hundred expatriates / wealthy indigenes in Niger Delta have been kidnapped within 2006 – 2008 for ransom; while the condition of the region remained unchanged (Alabrah, 2007). The violent agitation in the Niger Delta is manufactured, and its purveyors – oil multinationals and the government – are beneficiaries. The victims are,

of course, the indigenes of oil host communities (Niger Delta Crisis, 2000). According to Mitee, the late Saro Wiwa's successor (MOSOP), the violent agitation with the use of arms and criminal activities have taken over what use to be a peaceful and non-violent resistance (Afarefuna, 2008).

### **2.5.5 GOVERNMENT REACTION TO PROTEST (PEACEFUL AND VIOLENT)**

Government reaction to protest for recognition and development in Nigeria's Niger Delta started in early 1990s, however, after a peaceful protest in Ogoni land in 1993 which attracted international attention to the environmental challenges faced in the region; this event made the then military president Babangida to pass treason and treasonable offences decree which states that – any one who works together with international association or groups within the country and professes aside to minimize the sovereignty of Nigeria is / are guilty of treason and punishment by death (Afarefuna, 2008). The use of force by the Babangida junta was prevalent in the region for example; towns like Umuechem, Iko community, Bonny and other communities were not spared as they experienced surge in mobile police action for protesting, which ends up leaving people dead, injured or women / girls raped (Rowell, 1995). In 1993, late General Abacha's junta took control of Nigeria and things became worse for journalists who wrote stories on Niger Delta, protesters in the region, especially recognised activists organisation like MOSOP. However, in 1995 environmentalist Saro-Wiwa and eight others were killed and forty arrested for murder of four prominent Ogoni citizens (Idowu, 1999; Rowell, 1995). 'Thus, the accused were denied their right of appeal against their conviction which was covered under the Civil Disturbances (Special Tribunal) Decree 1995' (Idowu, 1999: 180). The death of Saro-Wiwa spawned a new breed of agitators violent in nature and fiercer by the day. The use of fire arms were introduced into the struggle and it continued into democracy in 1999 led by President Obasanjo's victory (Afarefuna, 2008).

The Niger Delta became a violent region of self expression and preservation with the emergence of freedom fighters and ethnic militias on every front as they could no longer watch their communities destroyed by government forces. Expectedly, the government

reacted to the violence with full scale police action, iron fist and in some cases the use of palliatives. The government now points a gun at the region with the finger constantly at the trigger under the guise of fighting militancy; occasionally the trigger is pulled (Akpan, 2008). For example, in 1999 twelve police officers were abducted by hoodlums in Odi a community in Bayelsa State, despite the intervention of state government, social movement and law officials in the region, the police officers were killed. Thereafter, under the command of Obasanjo, a major military operation commenced. Instead of going after the miscreants, the community was liquidated; no aspect of the community existence was spared. According to Port Harcourt Organisation Environmental Rights Action, two thousand, four hundred and eight three unarmed civilians were killed in the massacre (Rotberg, 2004). However, instead of removing the federal armed forces from the Niger Delta region to restore the people's confidence, the Obasanjo government reached an agreement with the United States government to supply arms and fast track boats. MOSOP and IYC condemned the act of military deployment into Niger Delta; they interpreted the government move as another military junta, designed to oppress oil communities struggling for social and ecological justice (Niger Delta Crisis, 2000).

The government realised that oppression and repressive laws brought more losses than revenue (Omoweh, 1995), however, when the late president, Yar'Adua assumed office in 2007 he indicated that his key aim was to stabilise the crisis in the region. Unlike previous government that used force and military might, Yar'Adua went for peace, in the pursuit of his goal he constituted a peace and reconciliation committee with the mandate to concentrate on conflict resolution in Nigeria's Niger Delta (Adedoja, 2007). Although, just like any other nation that fights crime, late Yar'Adua's government combats only miscreants and militants that bring unrest, civil disturbance to the region, disrupt oil production and kidnap expatriates for ransom (Ebiri and Ogbodo, 2008). In July 2008, the British government offered to assist in strategic support to completely wipe out militancy in the oil rich region to restore law and order in the area. Part of the support, was military assistance which Prime Minister (PM) Brown identified as a training and advisory package to support late Yar'Adua's proposed establishment of maritime security in the region (Oyedoyin et al, 2008; Ogundele, 2008). However, PM Brown's proposal to assist

with military operations led to reactions in Nigeria and a peaceful demonstration was staged by Ijaw Peoples Association (IPA) and other Nigerian groups at the Chatham House in London to express their objection. According to the chairman of Ijaw National Congress (INC) Tuodolo, PM Brown's offer was unnecessary at the time negotiations for Niger Delta summit were made to end the crisis, and he also noted that PM Brown provoked the immediate collapse of a vibrant militant group (MEND) three weeks old ceasefire in the Niger Delta region. Thus, the indigenes of the oil producing areas have seen too much blood shed because of their oil, any form of foreign / British military assistance will only exacerbate the crisis as Nigerian government will be encouraged to kill and intimidate the people of Niger Delta (Oyedoyin et al, 2008; see also Senge, 2008; Oyedoyin, 2008; Ogundele, 2008).

### **2.5.6 DIRECTION OF POLICIES (FROM 1960 – 2008) IN THE NIGER DELTA**

The abysmal conditions in the Niger Delta have made most individuals dismayed and lead them to believe that government has no solid, measurable policies for the region. Those who are of this view anchor their position on two reasons. First, there was no concrete attempt to address the appalling conditions in the Niger Delta, until the violent agitation started. Second, government intervention seems ineffective and appears bleak in view of the enormity of the conflict which is almost irresolvable. Previous years of government policies in the Niger Delta was perceived as 'half-hearted and mischievous in intent and negative in manifestation leaning towards incremental and or disjointed implementation theory of policy making' (Akpan, 2008: 307). Direction of policies emerged in 1957 a year before the exploitation of crude oil started in the region, after indigenes of Niger Delta and other ethnic minority groups had protest against the regional and central government in the allocation of basic amenities and political appointment to the Willink Commission, which was designed to negotiate for constitutional framework with which the country would be granted independence from Britain (Afamefuna, 2008; Niger Delta Crisis, 2000). Thus, their protest led to the establishment of Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961 to meet the developmental needs of the region (Nwabuwale, 2008; Bassey 2006 in Akpan, 2008; Niger Delta Crisis, 2000).

From 1966 onwards the military coups and civil war brought an end to the dreams and aspiration of NDDB to cater for the developmental need of the people. In 1969, Gowon military regime converted oil revenue to the federal government and enacted the petroleum degree, which claims land and mineral resources in the Niger Delta without consulting them. According to Gowon's key adviser Asiodu, the Niger Delta people were 'numerically insignificant' and could not change the state of affairs in the Nigeria scheme of things (Niger Delta Crisis, 2000: 2). After the Nigeria civil war in 1970, military reign continued and another commission was created – Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDBDA) to execute a similar job, however, the commission came to an end with the military rule in 1979. In 1980 the democratic president Shagari constituted what he called 1.5 percent committee to address the developmental challenges in the Niger Delta. The appointed committee did not perform their responsibility until the government was overthrown by General Buhari junta in 1983. Nothing was recorded about this military regime on the developmental challenges in the Niger Delta (Afarefuna, 2008).

In 1992, the military president Babangida established the Oil and Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) to compensate indigenous communities for ecological damage and also develop the region (Idowu, 1999; Akpan, 2008). The commission was viewed with suspicion as the chief executive was a high ranking military officer in government. However, given the nature of the commission, contracts were awarded to pro-government forces that did not challenge the government, Shell and other environmental agencies that were suppose to look at the level of degradation; rather, they were attracted to contracts for basic amenities in the mist of decay and gross pollution in the area. The hunger for government contracts led to the fraternity of traditional leaders with the military government, as a result, a chapter of the Association of Traditional Rulers in the Oil Producing Area (ATROPA) sprang up to weaken the solidarity of the youths (Omoweh, 1995, 1998; Idowu, 1999). Throughout the region the people who benefited from the commission were the traditional rulers, retired army generals, politicians and touts usually deployed to suppress uprising (Omoweh, 1995).

In 1999 following the transition into democracy hopes were high for the Niger Delta region. In 2001, the former democratic president Obasanjo went the old way to set up another commission, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), which succeeded OMPADEC (Afamefuna, 2008; Akpan, 2008). The summary of the commission's directive at the swearing in was to change the face of Niger Delta through sustainable development. The commission was designed by law to receive three percent of all monies from the federation account, however, the former chairman of the governing board Edem noted that this does not happen but the commission gets arbitrary allocation from the nine states in Niger Delta for twelve months. This means the commission is not getting enough fund to execute projects and achieve the targeted developmental goal spelt out in the master plan. Despite the commission (NDDC) is under funded, its impact is felt much more in various communities in Niger Delta than local and state government which receive thirteen percent derivation fund from federal government (Ero, 2007; Mamah, 2008). While the Niger Delta state governors have not shown enough commitment in partnering with NDDC, oil multinationals have shown some enthusiasm in partnering the commission to achieve a common goal in reinstating peace and stability in the region. One of such partner project was with Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and NDDC in the construction of the nine and a half billion naira (approximately forty-five million pounds) Ogbia-Nembe road, which is a 29.818 kilometre road comprising nine bridges (Ero, 2007). It is worth noting here that despite the innovation and developmental project executed by NDDC, the anger of the oil host communities in Niger Delta have not been completely doused. However, it can be said that the commission seem to have reduced the tension a little in the region (Aham, 2007). The diagram below by Ero (2007) illustrates net federal allocation into the nine states in Nigeria's Niger Delta region from May 1999 – December 2006. The parts in the table that are in bold signifies the selected states used for this research, NDDC and Local Government Areas (LGAs), and the total amount of federal allocation (Naira and Pounds equivalent) they have received from 1999-2006.

**TABLE: NET FEDERAL ALLOCATION FROM MAY 1999-DECEMBER 2006**

S/N	STATES/LGAs/NDDC	AMOUNT (N)	AMOUNT (£) rate @ N238 to £1
1	ABIA STATE	93.883 Billion	395 Million
2	AKWA IBOM STATE	331.358 Billion	1.4 Billion
3	<b>BAYELSA STATE</b>	<b>379.369 Billion</b>	<b>1.6 Billion</b>
4	CROSS RIVERS STATE	103.329 Billion	434 Million
5	<b>DELTA STATE</b>	<b>425,830 Billion</b>	<b>1.79 Billion</b>
6	EDO STATE	107,639 Billion	449 Million
7	IMO STATE	118,724 Billion	500 Million
8	ONDO STATE	160,558 Billion	675 Million
9	<b>RIVERS STATE</b>	<b>440,013 Billion</b>	<b>1.85 Billion</b>
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>2,160.703 Trillion</b>	<b>9.2 Billion</b>
	Local Govt Councils	671 Billion	2.8 Billion
	<b>Total (states and LGAs)</b>	<b>2,831.703 Trillion</b>	<b>12 Billion</b>
	<b>NDDC</b>	<b>241.5 Billion</b>	<b>1.017Billion</b>
	<b>SUM TOTAL</b>	<b>3,073,203 Trillion</b>	<b>13 Billion</b>

It is indeed plausible from the above available record that states and local government areas receive a sizeable amount of revenue from the federal government than the commission (NDDC) created to meet the developmental need of the people. The challenges faced by the commission are not only enormous but the indigenes in the Niger Delta are in a hurry to feel its impact. Thus, NDDC appears to be an alternative government to which all their demands are directed. State and local government seem to be doing less as indigenes complaint of their inaction and acknowledge the presence of NDDC in the building of schools, canalisation of the waterway, jetties, provision of clean water and others (Ero, 2007).



The late democratic president Umaru Yar'Adua who assumed office in 2007 continued with the vision of NDDC and also indicated a fifteen year master plan for the region because of the unabated agitation (Akpan, 2008). In view of expanding projects in the Niger Delta, Yar'Adua [late] made known his intention in early 2008 to create a new Niger Delta Ministry to tackle the unending challenges in the region (Walker, 2008). His intention prompted debate between critics; an activist and human rights lawyer notes that creating the Niger Delta ministry generates more bureaucracy that will avoid the real issues in the region. The information minister Odey and senator Yale note that the new ministry will create jobs, provide education and will undertake civil infrastructure projects (Walker, 2008; Daily Trust, 2008). However, 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2008, the Nigeria's cabinet approved a new ministry for the Niger Delta region [Ministry of Niger Delta] (Reuters, 2008). The secretary to Nigeria's federal government, Ahmed notes that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) will be a parastatal under the Ministry of Niger Delta (Taiwo, 2008). According to Akpan (2008), the formation of one policy after another appears to be incremental and ends up suffering from disjointed implementation. Incremental policy is a situation where a policy maker 'uses practical devices which do not pretend to search for comprehensive solutions that may be difficult or even impossible, to achieve' (Adebayo, 1986: 33). Thus, in regulating one policy after another, the whole succession may seem disjointed and each tried solution is another incremental of the other (Adebayo, 1986).

### **2.5.7 REFLEXIVE SECTION**

This section briefly explains the ethical dimension of transferring research paradigms in this study on risk society thesis largely developed in the west to that of the Africa context. Academic theories / literatures on risk society seem to be lacking in Africa due to lack of participation in the media and risk field. It is worth noting here that the achievements or failure of attempts in dealing with risk in the industrialised west inheres with Africa. In order to further the field of risk society thesis both in Africa and the west, my research engaged literatures formulated in the west; however, not limited to European cultures alone but can be generalised to the international community because from early twenty-

first century, environmental risk issues started to dominate international agendas for a whole generation of political leaders, government officials, academic community, NGOs and concerned citizens (see Greene, 2006). Academic literature on risk society used in this study referred to industrial societies in late modernity as global risk society (see Becks, 1995b: 7). The concept of risk is linked to reflexivity because worries about contemporary risk issues tend to pose questions about modern practices, which has led to the global awareness of risk that cuts across boundaries leading to world wide treaty. For example, global warming is of concern to the world despite intense disagreement whether the Earth climate is warming or not and if global climate change is man made or natural. As a result of global reaction to modern risk, the need to form new alliances, of ad hoc groups, a modern and different type of politics beyond traditional hierarchies have emerged (See, Lupton, 1999). This is evident in the Niger Delta situation as environmental activist groups in the region informed the international community of the risk issues that bedevil the region on a daily basis. By these processes risk society becomes world risk society in which political debate and action is globalised (See Lupton, 1999; Beck, 1992: 1995b). Nigerian as a nation will respond to risk issues due to inactive policies like any other nation in the west and this is the reason why there is conflict in the Niger Delta region. However, the conceptual framework on risk society used in this study fits reasonably well the issues in the Niger Delta region under investigation and the methods adopted for this study because the risk society thesis can be generalised and referred to universally.

Against this backdrop, the researcher came up with intriguing questions that were used for the survey [questionnaire] see appendix 1 and qualitative [interview] see appendix 2 in order to answer the very timely and penetrating Research Questions, in what has been, to date, a very under-researched area – namely, exploring the flows and impacts of trust and risk communication in agenda setting in a less developed country. See chapter one for an outline of main Research Questions; however, the main Research Questions for this study will be discussed further in chapter five.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter clearly explains the structure, aim and procedure of the methodological advances the researcher used in conducting this research. This study is a case study research method. The researcher used three states in Nigeria's Niger Delta region for the purpose of this study namely, Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers. The research design the researcher adopted for this research is the survey (quantitative / qualitative) method and interview (qualitative) method. Both methods are discussed in detail in this chapter.

#### **3.0. (i) CASE STUDY RESEARCH METHOD**

Case study research has been a useful tool for investigating specific issues and trends in diverse disciplines and professions. This method entails testing theoretical models or theories by applying them in real world situation: that is, testing if scientific theories and models actually work in real life scenario. Case study research method entails in-depth investigation of a specific situation. 'It is a research method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic' (Shuttleworth, 2008: 1). Thus, the case study research method for this study is an empirical inquiry that examines a current phenomenon [Niger Delta conflict] within its real life context; where boundaries between reality and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are consulted (Yin, 1994).

Critics of case study method note that small number of cases cannot offer reliability or generality of findings. Others believe biases can occur in the findings because of intense exposure to the study. Some argue that because a case study is such a narrow field that its finding cannot be generalized to fit an entire study population or question under investigation. However, researchers from diverse disciplines continue to adopt case study

research methodologies with success in carefully designed and crafted studies of real life situations, issues and conflict. Thus, in case study research methodology, new and unexpected findings might emerge during its course, and lead to research taking new directions (Yin, 1994; Soy, 1997; Shuttleworth, 2008). The technique used for organising and conducting this case study is explained below. It is worth noting here that the researcher did not use content analysis because this study is not searching for correlation between the Nigerian news media's output and it did not examine media content and textual analyses that do analyze messages or depend on archival or pre-existing documents for data.

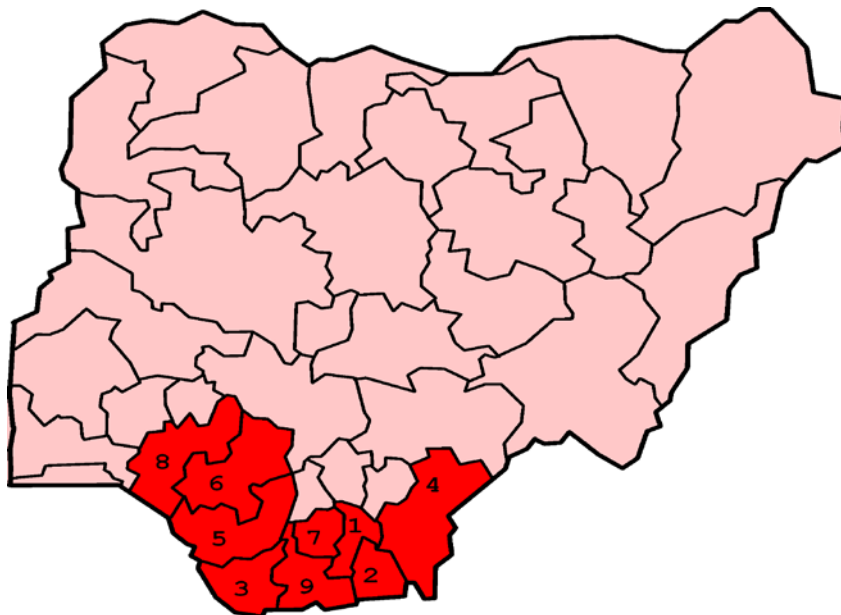
The first step the researcher adopted in this case study was to establish a firm research focus by developing research questions about the situation and issues to be studied and determining the purpose of the study. The researcher reviewed literatures that have been previously conducted to gain insightful questions into the problem the study presents. Thus, careful definition of questions emerging from a limited number of occurrences and their inter-relationship directed the researcher's attention to pinpoint where to look for evidence and determine what method of analysis to use for this study. The researcher adopted a multiple real life cases [Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State] to examine in-depth. It is worth bearing in mind that when using multiple cases, each case is treated as a single case and the findings / conclusions from each case can then be generalised to the study, but each remain a single case. However, the cases for this study represent a variety of geographical areas in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region (Soy, 1997). Other techniques used for case study research such as selection of cases [area of study], data gathering and analysis techniques are discussed extensively in this chapter. Data analysis will be in the fourth chapter and discussion of the findings and report preparation will be discussed in the fifth chapter of this study.

### 3.1 AREA OF STUDY

The areas for this study are three states in the Niger Delta part of Nigeria namely: Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers. This section will critically explain why the researcher chose the case studies for this research.

The Nigerian political landscape is divided into six geo-political zones namely: North West States, North Central States, North East States, South West States, South East States and South South States. The political landscape for this research is the South South geo-political zone [also called Niger Delta] comprising nine multi-ethnic states of the federation of Nigeria (Ashong and Udoudo, 2008; Paden, 2008). Below is a map of Nigeria numerically showing the locations of the nine multi-ethnic states in the Niger Delta region.

**Figure 1: MAP OF NIGERIA**



(1). Abia, (2). Akwa Ibom, (3). Bayelsa, (4). Cross rivers, (5). Delta, (6). Edo, (7). Imo, (8). Ondo, (9). Rivers

The Niger Delta is endowed with mangrove rainforest, creeks, swamps and streams formed by River Niger which is the third longest river in Africa with a length of 4,180km (Akpan, 2008). Underneath its waters are found the natural resources of crude oil and gas which serves as the nation's engine, accounting for ninety percent of Nigeria's income and twenty-five percent of gross domestic products (GDP) (Okonta and Douglas, 2003; Akpan, 2008). The Niger Delta is estimated to have nearly two hundred oil fields, and over four hundred production and reserve facilities in diverse locations within its swamps and creeks. Notably, gas production in the Niger Delta has made Nigeria the world seventh biggest supplier of natural gas with a total of 2.4 percent of world reserve (Nwabuaawe, 2008; also see Akpan, 2008; Okonta and Douglas, 2003). The Niger Delta is distinctive for its multi-ethnicity and has a total population of thirty one million, two hundred and twenty-four thousand, eight hundred and seventy-eight indigenes (National Population Commission, 2006). The oil and gas facilities in the Niger Delta are operated by multinational oil companies such as Shell, Mobil, Chevron, Elf, Agip and Texaco, in joint venture with the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). However, most of the conflict the region is currently experiencing (1956-2010) is as a result of crude oil exploration and exploitation (Akpan, 2008; Ashong and Udouo, 2008).

The South South geo-political landscape [Niger Delta] in Nigeria has over the years experienced conflict arising from risk issues such as environmental degradation due to oil exploration, for example; within 2006 and the first six months of 2008, one thousand, two hundred and sixty oil spills was recorded in the Niger Delta (Ochayi and Okereke, 2008; Lawal et al, 2008). Despite the large financial resources that have been allocated to the Niger Delta within the last nine years [1999-2008] of democracy in Nigeria, the developmental challenges in the region remained substantially unaddressed, a development that further triggered violent agitations and restiveness in the region (Adedoja, 2007). The neglect of these facts by the government and multinational oil companies has degenerated to increase conflict of interests over the years. However, the struggle for wealth control is most pronounced in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria due to the abuse and misuse of power (Osinachi, 2006).

The enormity of conflict and risk issues is pronounced in three states in the Niger Delta region namely: Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers which produce significant percentage of crude oil and also experience violence between the government, indigenes of oil host communities and multinational oil corporations. However, the researcher chose the aforementioned states for this study because the risk events emanating from crude oil exploration and violent agitation in the region seem to defy pattern of policy formulation. In addition, the aforementioned states receive more federal allocation than other states in the Niger Delta [see chart in 2.5.6] because they produce the most crude oil and yet experience utmost violence (Nwabuawele, 2008). Taking into account the enormity of conflict due to environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, the researcher was able to acquire adequate information from the target population in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State because the awareness of the conflict will be prevalent in these states. Thus, the researcher explains below why each of the selected states was chosen for this research.

### **3.1. (i) DELTA STATE**

Delta State was created out of the defunct Bendel State on August 27th 1991; it has twenty-five Local Government Areas (LGAs) with a total population of four million, ninety-eight thousand, three hundred and ninety-one indigenes (National Population Commission, 2006) and the capital city is situated in Asaba. There are five major ethnic groups in Delta State namely- Urhobo, Isoko, Igbo, Ezon and Itsekiri. (NgEX, 2006). Delta State was the second location where oil was found in 1958 by SPDC, about the same period oil was discovered in Ogoniland in Rivers State (Omoweh, 1998). At present, Delta State receives the second largest federal revenue allocation [see chart in 2.5.6, page 73] because it is the second largest oil producing state in Nigeria and supplies about thirty-five percent of the nation's crude oil and significant amount of natural gas (NgEX, 2006). Consequently, environmental degradation in Delta State such as oil spills, pipeline explosion leading to thousands of deaths for example; the 1998 Jesse community fire explosion in Delta State recorded over a thousand deaths (see, Campbell, 2001) and destruction of vegetation [see graphic illustration in 2.5.1, page 57-8]. Health consequences linked to gas flaring and underdevelopment within the region has further

increased the tempo of violent agitation in the region (Ochayi and Okereke, 2008; Ransome-Kuti, 2007; Omoweh, 1998). Thus, protest in Niger Delta over environmental degradation and underdevelopment was first started in Isoko community in Delta State under the umbrella of Francis Okpozio from 1974 to the 1980s before the emergence of different fronts currently operating in the region (Omoweh, 1998).

### **3.1.(ii) BAYELSA STATE**

Bayelsa State was created out of the old Rivers State on October 1, 1996 with its capital situated at Yenagoa; at the time of creation there were only eight Local Government Areas (LGAs); however, in the wake of democracy in 1999 additional twenty-four local government areas were created totalling thirty-two LGAs. The aim of this creation was to bring the government and development closer to indigenes at the grassroots (Jonathan, 2006). Bayelsa State has a total population of one million, seven hundred and three thousand, three hundred and fifty-eight indigenes (National Population Commission, 2006). It shares boundaries with Rivers States on the east, Delta State on the north and the Atlantic Ocean on the west and south. Oil was first struck in commercial quantity in 1956 at Oloibiri in Ogbia LGA (then Eastern Region of Nigeria, later became Rivers State) and currently Bayelsa State. There are hundreds of oil wells and flow stations across the state and contributes thirty percent of Nigeria's oil production. The major oil multinational companies operating in the region are Shell, Agip, Chevron Texaco (Jonathan, 2006). Bayelsa State receives the third largest federal revenue allocation [see table in 2.5.6, page 73] because it is the third largest oil producing state in the country. Despite the huge amount of revenue allocation into the state from federal government, restiveness and protest in the region have triggered government action that led to thousands of death. For example, in 1999 the former president Obasanjo ordered military operation in Odi community in Bayelsa State which claimed the lives of over two thousand people (Rotberg, 2004: also see Afamefuna, 2008). On February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Dickson the community spokesman for Odioma in Bayelsa State note that over one thousand, five hundred people lost their lives and about three thousand people detained under military operation over land dispute where Shell had started drilling crude oil



designated as Toru-9 flow station (Ijaw National Congress, 2005). At present, militancy in the region is prevalent for example, on the twenty-sixth of December 2008, not fewer than ten militants were killed by military officers at Agip flow station in Tebidaba in Bayelsa State (Adebayo, 2008).

### **3.1.(iii) RIVERS STATE**

Rivers State was created in 1967 with the split of the Eastern Region of Nigeria; at the time of creation, Rivers State had fifteen Local Government Areas (LGAs) and after Bayelsa State was carved out in 1996, additional eight LGAs were created making a total of twenty-three LGAs in the State (NgEX, 2006). The Capital is situated in Port-Harcourt and the state has a total population of five million, one hundred and eight-five thousand, four hundred indigenes (National Population Commission, 2006). Rivers State receives the largest federal revenue allocation because it is the largest producing oil state in the country which account for more than forty percent of Nigeria crude oil production and a significant amounts of natural gas. The state is classified as the nerve centre of over ninety industrial concerns, including major multinational oil company like SPDC, AGIP, Texaco, ELF, Chevron, NNPC and Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project, operating in the state (NgEX, 2006). Protest in Rivers State over underdevelopment and environmental degradation have led to hundreds and thousands of deaths. For instance, the execution of environmental activists Kenule Saro-Wiwa and eight others against SPDC on the account of environmental degradation in 1995 by the late Abacha-led Junta (Rowell, 1995). However, after the death of Kenule Saro-Wiwa and eight others, the initial peaceful protest became violent as fire arms were now introduced in Rivers State and other parts of the Niger Delta (Afamafuna, 2008).

## **3. 2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

In social science research, design of the study is a step-by-step guide or procedural plan employed by the researcher to acquire answers to research questions and problems – through the selection of a sample that suits the study, collection of relevant data that can

be used as a basis for testing a hypothesis and analysing the results. Thus, the research design for this study is aimed at answering questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically (Kerlinger, 1986; Thyer, 1993). The foregoing definition directs the researcher's attention to two main functions of the research design. The first conjures the identification and development of design procedures and the logistical arrangements needed to undertake the study, and the second highlights the significance of quality in the adopted procedure to ensure appropriateness (validity, objectivity and accuracy) of the findings (Kumar, 2005). The research design the researcher adopted for this study is the survey (Quantitative) method and interview (Qualitative) method. Both methods are explained in detail below.

### **3.3 SURVEY METHOD [QUANTITATIVE / QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS]**

The use of survey method is an essential part of social science research as they offer quick and relatively inexpensive way of obtaining the required results (characteristics and belief) of the population at large. Survey methods are frequently used in social science research, mostly by academic researchers, government and campaigning organisations alike. The method involves the collection of data from a large or even very large population. Notably, through the use of a representative sample, all surveys aim to explain the features or opinions of a population. Thus, some surveys are constructed to test theories and some aim to construct theories. Good survey research follows a regular procedure to test and develop a theory whereby a hypothesis or hypotheses will be formed. The formation of a hypothesis or hypotheses is the assumption which is deduced from a theory, which if found to be accurate will support the theory and if found to be contradictory will oppose all or part of the theory (May, 2007). In accordance with this study, hypotheses were developed to test theories and where necessary support / confirm or refute. It is worth bearing in mind that the question of confirmation and disproving of theories is controversial and complex; hence, in surveys, researchers usually seek statistical confirmation for a theory rather than proof. Surveys aim to demonstrate causal relationships; for example, what is perceived to be the main cause of the Niger Delta conflict? Might it be environmental degradation, underdevelopment, or unemployment?

For the most part, surveys demonstrate the potency of statistical association with variables (May, 2007). Just like any other method in all sciences, the survey method is not error free. The process used to carry out a survey has a significant effect on the probability that the result from the data will explain accurately what they are intended to describe. Embedded in sample survey are three distinct methodologies; sampling, designing questions and data collection. Each of these methods has many functions outside of sample surveys; however, if used together develops a good survey design (Fowler, 2002).

### **3.3(i) SAMPLING**

Sampling is the procedure used in selecting a few (a sample) from a larger group (the sampling population) in order to form the basis for predicting the spread of an unknown section of information or outcome regarding the larger group (May, 2007; Kumar, 2005). When using sampling method, there are different terminologies and steps the researcher must put in mind before carrying out the research, for example; in this study, the researcher collected information from eight hundred and eleven respondents out of one thousand two hundred potential respondents from the three selected states in the Niger Delta [see 3.1 for population size]. The three states from which the researcher collected the information in order to answer his research questions are classified as the study population. The small group of respondents selected from the larger group to obtain the required information is called the sample. The number of respondents the researcher collected the required information from is classified as the sample size. The way the researcher selected respondents is called sampling strategy and each respondent that became the basis for collecting the sample is classified as sampling unit. The findings obtained from the respondents (sample) are classified as sample statistics and the predictions or estimates arrived at from the sample statistics are classified as sample parameters (Kumar, 2005; Fowler, 2002).

Sampling method is not error free, thus the method has its advantages and disadvantages when selecting a small group (sample) from the larger group (study population). The

advantages are that it saves time, human resources and it is cost effective. The disadvantage is that the result derived from the sample is used to predict or estimate the total population characteristics of interest. Thus, the possibility of an error in the researcher's prediction or estimation exists. Factors that may affect the inference drawn from a sample on the one hand is the size of the sample; this is, results obtained from larger sample size are considered more accurate than those based on smaller ones. However, if a study population is small with respect to its features under study, a small sample can supply a valuable estimate, but if it is very large the researcher needs to select a larger sample to acquire an effective estimate. For example, in this study, the researcher chose a larger sample [one thousand two hundred respondents] because the study population is very large [see, 3.1 for population size]. On the other hand, the researcher must consider the extent of deviation in the sampling population; that is, the larger the standard deviation from the characteristics [age-21 and above, gender- male and female, rural/urban split, high / low literacy level, skilled/unskilled workers and students] under study for a given sample size, the higher will be the error (Kumar, 2005). Most samples are flawed in some ways; however, the researcher ensured that the characteristics of the sample used for this research, though not perfect, but should reflect a significant aspect of the total population.

There are different types of sampling methods namely; random / probability sampling, non-random / non-probability sampling and mixed sampling design. The researcher chose the random sampling design for this study. However, there are three commonly used types of random / probability design; simple random sampling, stratified random sampling and cluster sampling. The researcher used simple random sampling design for this study because each unit in the sampling population of interest has an equal and independent chance of selection in the sample (May, 1997). Equal chance of selection means that the choice of a unit in a sample is not manipulated by other thoughts such as personal preference, while the independent chance of selection means that the choice of one unit during sampling is not dependent upon the choice of another unit in the sampling (Kumar, 2005; Fowler, 2002). There are two ways of drawing a random sample; sampling with replacement and sampling without replacement. The researcher used

sampling without replacement in order to avoid choosing any member of the population more than once. To ensure sampling without replacement or each sample from the target population is not chosen more than once for this study, the researcher ensured that after questionnaires were distributed and collected in a particular area, the researcher moved on to the next target area without revisiting areas that have been covered. However, to ensure randomness during distribution of questionnaires every fifth person of the target population were asked to participate in the study. In order to ensure representativeness of the study population, the areas [rural / urban split] where the questionnaires were distributed, selected individuals, such as, male and female within the target age range [twenty-one years and above] with high / low literacy level, skilled and unskilled workers and students had an equal chance of selection (Spiegel et al, 2000). Thus, an unbiased sampling strategy is very important because it will better represent the population in a long run, and also allow the researcher to draw externally valid conclusions about the population. However, this may not guarantee a perfect representation of the total population (Kumar, 2005: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

### **3.3(ii) INSTRUMENTATION / DESIGNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In social science research, the category of the study population, the resources available and the nature of research question will determine the type of research instrument to use. The research instrument used for the quantitative part of this study was the questionnaire. However, there are three types of questionnaires used in survey when collecting data from respondents: the face-to-face interview, the telephone survey and the mail or self completion questionnaire. The researcher adopted the self completion questionnaire because it is a more cost effective method of data collection than the others (May, 1997). The criteria for adoption of the questionnaire method are as follows: First, the geographical distribution of the study population – the target population are relatively large and they are scattered over a wide geographical area [see 3.1]. Second, the nature of the investigation – the researcher felt that a larger number of potential respondents [inhabitants of oil affected region] may feel reluctant to discuss the issues the study is

investigating. Putting this into consideration, the researcher felt that the questionnaire would be the best option as it ensures anonymity (Kumar, 2005).

The self completion questionnaire has its advantages and disadvantages; the advantages are as follows. First, it is cost effective. Second, the anonymity of respondents may be advantageous especially when dealing with sensitive issues such as political or ethical issues. Third, respondents take their own time to fill in the questionnaires and also consider their responses. Fourth, it saves time especially when covering a wider geographical area at a lower cost. The disadvantages, on the other hand, are that response rate may be low. Second, after the questionnaire is administered there may be no control over who answers the questions; for example, the researcher may target girls in the household, but boys may fill it instead. Third, the possibility of investigating beyond the answer respondent give is absent. Fourth, the opportunity for the researcher to clarify issues is lacking; that is, if a respondent does not understand the question or interpret it wrongly, it will definitely affect the quality of data provided (May, 2005; Fowler, 2002). Considering the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire, the researcher adopted some measures in order to cushion the weaknesses to a minimal level for effective data collection. To be precise, before the researcher started obtaining data from potential respondents, it was in the researcher's interest to make sure that respondents were willing to share information with the researcher. That is, the researcher encouraged and motivated the respondents by explaining clearly and in simple terms the significance of the study, at the time of distribution and through the introductory or cover letter of the questionnaire. Second, the researcher endeavoured to make respondents understand what is expected of them in the questions in order to achieve the required results. Third, it is an imperative prerequisite that respondents should have an understanding of what the study is about. In other words, respondents must have the information sought. Fourth, in a situation where respondents may find some questions difficult [probably due to literacy issue] and need further assistance filling in the questionnaire, the researcher provided a contact phone number and email address to clarify any issues or query [see appendix 1, cover letter for questionnaire]. Fortunately, there was no contact from respondents over issues such as difficult questions or query of any kind, perhaps it might be due to

respondents' embarrassment / apathy or the questions were straight forward and no difficulties were encountered. Fifth, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that respondents will trust that their anonymity will be ensured. That is, no name and contact information were required (Kumar, 2005).

Having decided upon the type of questionnaire used for this study, it was imperative to construct the form and wording of the questions with extreme care as they will definitely affect the quality and type of information obtained. The researcher constructed some key guidelines to aid in designing the questions for this study: first, the researcher avoided using questions that were insufficiently specific. Second, bearing in mind the intended target population, it was imperative to use the simplest language to convey the meaning of the research questions. Third, language that sounded prejudicial was avoided. Fourth, the use of ambiguous, hypothetical and vague words was avoided in order to get the desired result. Fifth, caution was applied when asking personal questions especially as this study related to political and ethical issues. Finally, the researcher ensured the target population had the necessary knowledge to answer the questions before administering the questionnaires. That is, respondents' knowledge was measured by asking them if they have sufficient knowledge about the Niger Delta conflict before administering the questionnaires (for more see, May, 1997). See appendix I, for questions as an example of good practice.

As the nature and structure of the questionnaires for this study were intended for respondents to fill out themselves, a cover letter was also required. It is worth bearing in mind that a good cover letter should explain the purpose of the questionnaire; stressing the relevance for co-operation and anonymity of replies are therefore required. Respondents were made to understand that participation was voluntary and they had the right to respond or not. However, the researcher's contact number was provided in case the respondents had any questions and also a return address for the questionnaires and deadline for its return was made available. At the end of the covering letter the researcher thanked the respondents for their participation in the study (May, 1997; Kumar, 2005). See appendix I, for cover letter as a specific example of good practice.

The questionnaire for this study was divided into two sections and respondents were given instructions on how to answer the questions in each section. The first section entailed personal information from respondents such as location, sex, age range and occupation. The following questions will help the researcher see how views vary between different groups of the population. The second section consisted of research questions that were intended for the respondents to answer. The research questions for this study were in open-ended and closed-ended format; however, a larger portion of the questions were in closed-ended format. Closed-ended questions are very useful for collecting factual information, while open-ended questions give respondents the opportunity to express their opinion and perception about a given issue. In other words, it gives room for more information (Kumar, 2005; Fowler, 2002; May, 1997). Considering the relevance of this research and to get an appropriate or a more positive feedback from respondents via the use of questionnaire, the researcher decided to pilot the questionnaire on a sub-sample before it was distributed to the full sample. The reason for this action is to enable the researcher take account of any unforeseen problems in the administration of the questionnaires, such as rephrasing questions, length of questions or the elimination or addition of questions (May, 2002).

The pilot survey was conducted among fifteen Nigerians that are indigenes of Nigeria's Niger Delta who are current and have a vast knowledge about the Niger Delta conflict. The method of distribution the researcher used was via e-mail and responses received were by phone and e-mail. The options in question thirteen were rephrased from 'very good', 'good', 'poor' and 'very poor' to 'very high quality', 'high quality', 'neither high nor low quality' 'low quality' and 'very low quality' in order to get a positive feedback from respondents by giving them a better option. Question seventeen was also rephrased from 'Do you think changing the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to Ministry of Niger Delta will solve the Niger Delta crisis?' to 'Do you think the creation of Ministry of Niger Delta alongside the operation of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) will end the conflict in the Niger Delta?' because my attention was drawn to the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry alongside Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). This is because as at the time the literature review was



constructed, there was still debate over the creation of Niger Delta Ministry [see appendix I]. These were the only amendments the researcher made before the questionnaires were administered to the full sample.

### **3.3(iii) DISTRIBUTION AND METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

The researcher distributed a total of one thousand two hundred questionnaires in the area of study [Niger Delta]. That is, four hundred questionnaires were distributed to each of the chosen states; Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers. Taking into account the large geographical terrain of each state [see, 3.1] and how the target population are scattered over the prime areas [oil producing communities] within each chosen states, the researcher had to travel to these prime regions to monitor the distribution and collection of questionnaires. The method of distributing the questionnaires was by face-to-face as mail would have been ineffective because the researcher did not want to send questionnaires at random since he was not too familiar with the terrain. To effectively achieve this purpose, the researcher thought it pertinent to employ individuals in each of the prime areas to help monitor the distribution and ensure that a reasonable amount of questionnaires were retrieved before the set deadline for this purpose and handed back to the researcher. Another reason for employing these helping hands in the prime areas was to save time and money as the researcher was very busy visiting other areas for this study.

However, the individuals [four in each state, both male and female within the age of 20-35] the researcher employed for the purpose of distribution and collection of questionnaires were trained and given instructions on how to execute their functions adequately. First, respondents must be twenty-one years and above. Second, to ensure everyone in the region has a random and equal chance of being selected, the researcher instructed the employed individuals on locations that will be used and the researcher personally monitored the distribution of questionnaires to the various locations needed for this research to avoid only certain types of people from answering the questions. The locations used for the distribution of questionnaires were colleges and universities [academic and non-academic staffs and students were used for the study], government

and private institutions, skilled and unskilled labour - that is, areas where people are predominantly engaged in fishing, agriculture, local trade and community leaders. Thus, it is worth noting here that the locations used for this study were core areas that are at the centre of the conflict within the selected states. In Delta State, the locations used for the survey were – Sapele, Warri, Ughelli, Oleh, and Asaba. The locations used for the survey in Bayelsa State were – Yenagoa, Amassoma, Odi and Kaiama. The locations used for the survey in Rivers State were – Ogu-bolo, Okrika, Port-Harcourt, Bori, Gokana and Ogoniland. Third, after distribution the researcher gave instructions to the employed individuals on how to follow up and collect the questionnaires as it might take days for some respondents to actually fill in the questionnaires and return. Fourth, the standard set date the researcher used for the collection of questionnaires was three working days. The reason for this decision is that, on the one hand, from the researcher's previous experience the longer questionnaires stays in the hands of respondents the harder it becomes to retrieve, in most cases, loss of questionnaires may occur through migration or respondents forgetting to return the questionnaire. Furthermore, the people employed may forget who they have issued the questionnaires to.

### **3.3 (iv) POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

The target population for this study are respondents within the age of twenty-one years and above, and were both male and female from the selected states [Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers] in the area of study [Niger Delta]. The reasons for selecting the target age range in the aforementioned states are as follows: First, in the researcher's own point of view, respondents within this age group are classified to be independent in making their own informed decision without any form of interference from external sources when filling in the questionnaires. Second, for clarity sake, the crisis is not new and can be better understood as a long-drawn out historical process which can be traced back to 1956 when oil was first struck in the Niger Delta. Considering the age range, the researcher felt that respondents must have availed history knowledge of the crisis through diverse forms of institutions and also experience in person any form of current crisis, government plans / motive and environmental degradation within the region. Third, the target population can

clearly express themselves when filling in the questionnaire especially the open-ended questions. This is because the total adult literacy rate from 2003-2008 in Nigeria was 72 percent (UNICEF, 2010). Fourth, the researcher made sure by asking respondents in the chosen region their level of educational attainment / knowledge about the Niger Delta conflict before questionnaires were administered in order to acquire the necessary / adequate information needed for this study.

### **3.3(v) METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The tool of data analysis adopted for this study is the Microsoft Excel Package. The analysis entails the structuring and organising of data from which conclusions can be drawn and verified (Collis and Hussey, 2003). For example, the questionnaire was designed to measure various aspects of respondents' view on the Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria. The researcher came up with twenty possible questions and each question was a statement followed by variables in subcategories, for instance, 'very often', 'often', 'rarely' and 'very rarely'. Thus, the questionnaire for this study is made up of multiple items each of which demands a response from the same individuals. As such, the design is a repeated measure. Thus, repeated measures go in different columns, different questions on a questionnaire should each have their own column in Excel (Field, 2005: 1). Hence, for the purpose of this study, the research data gathered was analysed using Microsoft Excel Package and the responses from the target population was presented in bar charts. The method the researcher used to calculate respondents response rate via questionnaire to percentage is shown below:

$$\frac{\text{Number of responses}}{\text{Total number of respondents}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

### **3.4 INTERVIEWING [QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY]**

Qualitative interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods to obtain information from individuals or understand our fellow human beings in social sciences. This process has a wide multiplicity of forms and variety of uses. There are two types of format used during the interview; the individual, which usually takes the form of face-to-face verbal interchange and the face-to-face group interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 1998). Beyond the wide objectives of testing hypothesis / concepts, theoretical development and objectives of description, qualitative interviewing may also be relevant in the combination with other methods. That is, 'insights gained from qualitative interviewing may improve the quality of survey design and interpretation' (Gaskell, 2000: 39). In qualitative interviewing, there are four types of interviews; structured interview, the semi-structured interview, the unstructured or focus interview and the group interview (Flick, 2002). For the purpose of this research, the researcher adopted the semi-structured interview as questions were specified or fixed on the issues investigated and the researcher is also free to probe beyond the answers and thus engage the interviewee in a dialogue. However, this method would allow the researcher to seek clarification and elaboration on issues or the answers given. The semi-structured interview permits the interviewee to answer questions using their own terms and thus provide a greater structure for comparability. This method of interview is useful because the researcher had specific focus for the interviews within the range of the other method [questionnaire] employed for this study (May, 1997).

The qualitative interviewing method has its own advantages and disadvantages; the advantages are as follows: First, in an interview, questions that are not quite clear to the interviewee can be explained by the interviewer. Second, qualitative interviewing is a way of collecting in-depth information by probing. Third, the interview is appropriate for complex situation; that is, studies that are complex and sensitive in nature, the researcher can prepare the respondents before asking sensitive questions and explain difficult / complex questions to the respondents in person. The disadvantages of qualitative interview are as follows: First, interview is expensive and time-consuming. Second, in an

interview, the quality of information obtained is affected by the skills, experience and commitments of the interviewer. Third, the quality of communication between the researcher and respondent in an interview is likely to affect the quality of information obtained (Kumar, 2005).

Thus, taking into account the disadvantages of interviews, in order to cushion this effect, the researcher employed three necessary conditions to the successful completion of an interview: First, accessibility; that is, subject to availability of information by respondent. In other words, the person [interviewee] answering the questions must have access to the information the researcher seeks. Certain conditions can lead to a situation where the respondent or interviewee cannot provide the information the researcher seeks, for instance; the interviewee may know the answer but have forgotten or the interviewee may not want to disclose some information probably due to political, ethical or person reasons. In such a situation, the researcher must make a decision whether or not to continue the line of questioning, or the interview itself. Fortunately for the researcher, the ten respondents that took part in the interview indicated their willingness to provide needed information in accordance with the questions during the interview. Second, cognition; that is, the interviewee should have an understanding of what is expected and also the information that is required of them before the interview actually starts. It is worth bearing in mind that without this, the interviewee may feel uncomfortable and this can affect the resultant data. Thus, the researcher encouraged the ten interviewees used for this study to exhibit a high level of knowledge and competence to the interview questions during the interview. Third, motivation; the researcher made the people taking part in the interview feel that their participation / co-operation is fundamental to the conduct of the study and also their answers are valued (May, 1997).

### **3.4 (i) POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

For the qualitative interviewing aspect of this research, the target population of the study were policy makers, heads / staffs of federal and state environmental agencies within the Niger Delta, community leaders of oil host communities, journalists, environmental

activists, government officials, politicians and academicians. The reason for this selection is to get the required or in-depth information needed for the study. However, the population of this study are linked to different aspects of the Niger Delta conflict; that is, they hold vital information in their area of profession as compared to the larger population used for the quantitative aspect of this research that may just be aware of the conflict around their immediate surroundings. For instance, policy makers in government sector can give vital information on government plans to amend policy, tackle the conflict and give reasons for government actions as regards the conflict. Another clear example is documentation and records of environmental degradation by environmental agency or oil companies. The researcher felt that the target population for the qualitative aspect of this research are knowledgeable, have a greater awareness and can clearly express their opinions and give rich insight into the issues the researcher wishes to investigate. It is worth noting here that the interviewees used for the qualitative aspect of this research also took part in the survey.

### **3.4 (ii) DISTRIBUTION AND METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

Considering the wide geographical area for this research, the researcher was able to conduct ten interviews from the selected states [Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers] in order to stay within the actual budget for this purpose and meet the set deadline for data collection as the researcher was also conducting the quantitative aspect of this research. Gaskell acknowledges that for a single researcher, the limit that is required to conduct and analyse interview is between 10 and 25 interviews (2000). The pattern of interview the researcher adopted for this research was the individual or face-to-face interview.

The individual interview is a type of conversation that differs from ordinary conversations in a number of respects. The individual interview in most cases last for an hour to an hour and a half between two unacquainted individuals. The face-to-face interview took the form of one person, the interviewer or researcher, is expected to ask the questions; the other, the respondent or interviewee is expected to respond to them. The choice of topic discussed was entirely up to the researcher; thus, beforehand the

interviewees were given serious consideration and informed about what is expected of them. This pattern of interview presents a situation where the interviewee may be rather self-conscious, hesitant and defensive. In situations like this, the interviewee may lack trust for the interviewer and decide to limit answers to what is assumed to be informative and imperative, and take on positions on issues that match a specific self-image (Gaskell, 2000; also see, Fontana and Frey, 1998). Putting these understandable tendencies into utmost consideration, the researcher created an atmosphere suitable to establish a relationship of trust and win the interviewee's confidence in order for the interviewee to talk at length and expand on issues that the researcher wishes to probe further. This was 'achieved by the interviewer's form of questions, by verbal and non-verbal reinforcement and by being relaxed and unselfconscious' (Gaskell, 2000; 45-6). Furthermore, the researcher won the interviewees trust and support by explaining that my research was self sponsored to advance the completion of my PhD programme and their contributions through the interview will be valued as the research was geared towards seeking a lasting solution to the Niger Delta conflict.

The instrument the researcher adopted to store data during the interview was the tape recorder. The reason for this selection is that tape recorder aids interpretation as it allows the researcher to concentrate on what is said rather than note taking. It also guides against the interviewer using his own words for those of the interviewee (May, 1997). It was imperative that prior to the interview, the researcher checked if the tape recorder was in perfect condition and also take care to press the right button in the interview (Gaskell, 2000). Unfortunately, the back up tape recorder became very useful as the other tape recorder purchased for the purpose of the interview developed some technical problems that could not be solved after the first interview. It is always good for researchers to equip themselves when embarking on such research field work in order to deal with unforeseen circumstances when it arises.

### **3.4 (iii) METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative interviewing presents the researcher with a variety of analysis to choose from after successful completion of the interview. The analysis employed for this purpose is a combination of results from the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire at the same time when analysing the data. The reason for this combination is to get a fuller picture or knowledge about the issues in the study which is wider than that a single approach would have provided or to mutually confirm the findings of both approaches. Here, the qualitative and quantitative methods will complement each other on the issues in this study and this is regarded as the complementary compensation of the flaws and blind spots of each single method. The background of this idea views the quantitative and qualitative methods as complementary rather than competitive; and none of the methods combined is seen as preliminary or better, but they are seen as equals in their role in this study based on the actual research issues at hand. For example, the study population is given a structured questionnaire to fill at random, but in the second step, the researcher decided which participant of the survey study are selected for the interviews [semi-structured] to enable the researcher probe beyond the structured questions in the questionnaire. Their answers in both were put together and referred to each other in the analysis (Flick, 2002). According to May, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, perhaps in a multi-method approach, may remedy some of the weaknesses and difficulties; however, it is not an automatic resolution of all methodological difficulties (1997).

### **3.5 ETHICAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THIS RESEARCH**

Social science research and other related academic and non-academic professions are guided by a code of ethics that has evolved over the years to house the changing ethos, expectations, values and needs of individuals who hold a stake or participate in the profession. Some professions are better placed and well advanced in terms of their code of ethics. Some take strict measures to make sure every stake holder in the profession adhere to the code of ethics and where breached appropriate steps will be taken against



those who abstained from the guidelines. Over the years, many research institutions (such as law, business, education, psychology, medicine and other social sciences) have written a well structured and established code of ethics separately for research to govern the way research is carried out in their respective field (Kumar, 2005). It is worth noting here that the researcher consulted the University of Glamorgan's ethical guidelines for researchers at the start of this study.

Ethical behaviour in research means in accordance with principles of conduct that are deemed correct, especially those of a given profession. Notably, there are certain behaviours in research that are considered not appropriate and regarded as unethical - such as inflicting harm on people, contravening confidentiality, inappropriate use of information and introducing bias. However, in this research there are various stakeholders and it is worth looking at the ethical issues in relation to each of them: First, the research participants and second, the researcher (Kumar, 2005; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle; 2000; King et al, 1999).

### **3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES RELATING TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

In social sciences, research participants are respondents such as individuals, groups or communities that provide information for the researcher to help in gaining understanding of an issue, situation, phenomenon or interaction (Kumar, 2005). There are ethical issues to be considered when dealing with participants in this research fieldwork such as:

#### **3.6 (i) COLLECTING INFORMATION**

There would have been no progress in this research without collecting information from respondents. However, it is worth bearing in mind that research is required to improve conditions and it also helps society directly or indirectly. There are codes of conduct to adhere to when collecting information from respondents with regards to this research. First, before any information in the quantitative and qualitative aspect of this research was collected, the respondents' informed consent was obtained. Second, the researcher

considered the importance and usefulness of the research he undertook and was able to convince the aforementioned target population by justifying the importance of the research he undertook. This is good practice as it is ethical for researchers to inform their target population ahead of time and gain informed consent before information is collected (Kumar, 2005).

Seeking sensitive information can pose an ethical dilemma in research. Respondents sometimes may be unwilling to provide certain types of information because they may consider it sensitive and thus an invasion of privacy. However, researchers must pursue their interest in the area and add to the existing body of knowledge (Kumar, 2005). According to Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, researchers find themselves confronted with difficulties in gathering sensitive information (2000). For example, the researcher envisaged sensitive questions arising from this research such as, seeking information from the government and community leaders on violation of political and civil rights which have been executed mainly in response to demonstration about activities of multinational institutions that produce Nigeria's oil and the use made of the oil funds by the Nigerian government without developing the oil host communities. Further sensitivities arose from seeking information from community leaders on how the crisis and environmental degradation has affected them and their communities and how many people have lost their lives or fallen victims to these circumstances. However, seeking such sensitive information allowed the researcher to pursue his interest in the field and added to the existing body of knowledge.

However, it is ethical to ask such sensitive or intrusive questions in this type of research provided the respondents are aware of the nature of 'information you are going to ask clearly and frankly, and give them sufficient time to decide if they want to participate, without any major inducement' (Kumar, 2005: 213). After collecting data from respondents, the researcher examined carefully whether their participation in the study was likely to harm the respondents in any way. If it was likely to, the researcher took appropriate measure to reduce the risk to a minimal level. Minimal risk in this context

means that the level to which the research will harm or bring discomfort is not greater than that ordinarily encountered in every day life (Kumar, 2005).

### **3.6 (ii) SEEKING CONSENT**

In every profession informed consent can be seen as a benchmark for ethical code of practice (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). 'It is considered unethical to collect information without the knowledge of participants, and their expressed willingness and informed consent' (Kumar, 2005: 212). In social science research, informed consent is commonly used. It implies that respondents are adequately aware of the type of information they are giving, for what purpose, why the information is needed, how they are expected to participate in the research and to what extent it will directly or indirectly affect them. It is expedient that consent should be voluntary and without any form of force or pressure (Kumar, 2005; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000).

According to Schinke and Gilchrist, 'under standards set by the commission for the protection of human subjects, all informed-consent procedures must meet three criteria: participant must be competent to give consent; sufficient information must be provided to allow for reasoned decision; and consent must be voluntary and uncoerced' (1993: 83 in Kumar, 2005: 213). Competency, according to Schinke and Gilchrist (1993), is the state of an individuals' physical and mental well being and legal abilities of respondents to give informed consent (in Kumar, 2005). The researcher constructed a written informed consent letter stating the researchers' name, school, why he is conducting the research, the areas for the study, the target population and promise the respondents that all answers will be treated confidentially. See appendix I and appendix II for questionnaire and interview consent letter.

### **3.6 (iii) PROVIDING INCENTIVES**

Providing incentives to respondents has raised ethical questions in research because most people think that offering incentives is unethical (Kumar, 2005). Respondents used for

this research did not participate because of incentives but because of the importance of the research. Kumar, acknowledges that ‘in her experience most people do not participate in a study because of incentives, but because they realise the importance of the study’ (2005: 213). Therefore, providing a small gift to respondents after having obtained their information, as a sign of appreciation, in Kumar’s opinion it is not unethical. However, it is unethical to give gifts before data collection (Kumar, 2005). After data was collected from both interviewees and respondents who participated in the survey, the researcher verbally thanked them and no incentive was given.

### **3.6 (iv) MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY**

In research it is unethical sharing information about a participant with others for the purpose other than research. However, the researcher has kept all information elicited from respondents as anonymous because it is unethical to identify a respondent after they are made to understand that the study is strictly anonymous. Therefore, the researcher ensured that after all information has been collected, its sources cannot be identified or known (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000; also see Kumar, 2005). The researcher chose to adopt the practice of anonymising respondents’ answers because of the nature of the research as it is directly related to Niger Delta conflict that involves the government. In the researchers’ experience most Nigerians do not like revealing their identities on sensitive issues relating to crisis especially when the government is involved.

### **3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES RELATING TO THE RESEARCHER**

In social science research, there are ethical codes of conduct that researchers must adhere to when applying data elicited from respondents in their research work such as avoiding bias, using a valid methodology and make use of information appropriately without any form of distortion (King et al, 1999: also see Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000).

### **3.7 (i) AVOIDING BIAS**

The researcher must act with integrity because bias on the part of the researcher is unethical. Bias is an intentional attempt to confuse respondents with questions during data collection stage, to hide what the researcher has found in his study at the data interpretation stage, or to emphasize something unreasonably to its true existence (Kumar, 2005). At the data collection stage of this study the researcher ensured that questions that were asked at the interview and questionnaire were item that served the purpose of this study. In doing so, the researcher kept the following principles in mind when constructing the research questions. First, questions were made simple and familiar to all respondents, and relevant to the study. Second, the researcher aimed for accuracy to ensure the meaning of questions was clear. Third, double-barrelled questions were avoided; that is, each question must cover only one issue. Fourth, leading questions were avoided; that is, questions that lead respondents to one direction instead of treating each possible response equally. Fifth, sufficient context for respondents to respond realistically or remember accurately was provided. That is, questions were brief as possible in order for respondents to digest with the least effort. Sixth, the researcher checked for a social desirability effect; that is, questions were designed in such a way for respondents to find it easy to give their views even if it is negative or might oppose that of other respondents (Kumar, 2005; May, 1997).

It is generally accepted that researchers have to support claims for their contribution or make a causal statement which is generally based within a set of theories upon which researchers consult. That is, researchers have a predisposition to certain theories. Thus, bias in data interpretation and framing is unavoidable, with the interpretation representing a standpoint not absolute truth. When reflecting the play of ethnicity, class, culture, race and gender, all texts are biased because objective interpretations are impossible (Belk, 2006). Bias in data interpretation cannot be easily set aside, but should instead be acknowledged and even used as productive prejudices that sensitise the researcher to research the issue at hand [Niger Delta conflict]. Considering the fact that the researcher hails from Nigeria's Niger Delta region, it is in the researcher's interest to be impartial in

order not to create / cause harm to anyone being investigated or respondents used for the study. The researcher took appropriate measures to avoid unproductive biases when interpreting data such as hiding what the researcher found, emphasize something unreasonably to its true existence, interpreting data to support a particular group and manipulating the findings to suit a specific situation.

### **3.7 (ii) USING VALID METHODOLOGY**

In research it is inappropriate and unethical to use a method or procedure that is not valid. In quantitative research there are two key concepts – validity and reliability (sometimes referred to as internal validity and external validity). Internal validity is ‘the extent to which the effects detected in the study are a true reflection of reality rather than the results of extraneous variables’ (Burns and Grove, 2005: 215). External validity can be defined as the extent to which the findings / outcomes of a study can be generalized across and to settings, times and population (Johnson and Christensen, 2000). According to Onwuegbuzie, every study in education has threats to internal and external validity. Thus, these threats to internal and external validity can be described as internal replication and external replication (2000).

Internal replication threat refers to the extent to which the findings of a study would re-emerge if the research was replicated using exactly the same sample, time frame, context and settings. If truly the independent variable was accountable for the changes in the dependent variable, with no rival hypotheses, then the study will yield exactly the same result if an internal replication is conducted. On the other, external replication threats connotes that the outcomes / findings of the study would replicate across different sample of the study, time frame, settings and contexts. If the sample was truly generalised, then external replications across diverse sample will produce the same findings. There are three stages in research that threats to internal and external validity can emerge; these stages are the inquiry process: research design / data collection, data analysis and data interpretation (Onwuegbuzie, 2000a). It is in the researcher’s interest that this study, if

replicated, will produce the same result or arrive at the same conclusion. Thus, in order to achieve this, the researcher adopted the following measures which are stated as follows

First, threats to internal validity can emerge when invalid instrument is used. That is, when results yielded from instrumentation lack consistency or generates invalid result. Hence, the researcher took appropriate measures to construct the instrument [questionnaire] used for this study in order to obtain valid results [see, 3.3. ii]. Second, different selection of participants, also known as selection bias occurs at the data collection stage of a study; most often, it occurs when already organised [i.e., non-randomized] participants are compared. Thus, to avoid selection bias, the researcher adopted measures to ensure adequate random selection of the target population [see, 3.3. iii]. Third, mortality is the situation when respondents who have been chosen for the study fail to take part or do not participate in every phase of the investigation. This occurs when respondents have low level of motivation and persistence. This can, however, affect the study if the response rate is low. Hence, this study was designed in such a way to avoid the chances of attrition by motivating respondents at data collection stage through the cover page of the questionnaire and in some cases verbally [see 3.3. ii and appendix 1 and II]. Fourth, researcher's bias can be active or passive source. The passive include personal traits or attributes of the researcher for example age, gender, ethnicity or institutions. This study mobilizes different multi-ethnic societies in Niger Delta and institutions such as government, oil companies, media and other profession. It is worth bearing in mind that the researcher hails from the Niger Delta; hence the researcher did not allow prior knowledge of respondents from different ethnic background or institution influence the conduct of data collection or influence findings to favour a particular group. This is because the research is of relevance to all parties / stakeholders involved in the study. However, to avoid such biases, the researcher adopted the anonymous format of questionnaire and also ensured every member of the target population had an equal chance of selection to avoid preference and personality trait (Onwuegbuzie, 2000b).

Threats to external validity emerge at the research design / data collection stage. First, population validity refers to the extent which the findings from this study are

generalizable from the sample to the study population as well as different sub groups within the larger target population. Thus, to achieve this purpose, the researcher used a large and random sample technique to ensure population validity of results [see, 3.3.i]. Second, ecological validity; refers to the extent which findings from this research can be generalized across contexts, setting, conditions and variables. The researcher ensured that findings from this study are generalisable from the locations [Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State] where the investigation took place. Findings from this research can be generalised to the Niger Delta states [see Map in 3.1 for Niger Delta states] as they experience the same conflict but on a different scale and also certain aspects of the findings that are of national concern [like, media laws, policies, financial management and others] can be generalized to the whole country. Taking internal and external validity in quantitative study into account, the appropriate ethical standard procedure guided the researcher in adhering to the code of research ethics.

Ethics in qualitative study directs the researcher's attention and focus to trustworthiness of the findings by demonstrating that they are transferable, credible, confirmable and dependable. These terms used in qualitative study are often likened to terms used in quantitative study, such as credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity). However, there are still contentions that quantitative language is not congruent to qualitative study (Conrad and Serlin, 2005; McKay, 2006).

First, in qualitative study, credibility depends on the extent to which it resonates true to the study population and colleagues in the field. To ensure credibility in this research, the researcher ensured that the interpretation of the case under study is accurate based on the knowledge and understanding of the study population. In other words, the case under investigation is credible when what the researcher interprets and presents depicts reality of the respondents who informed the study in ways that resonate with them. To satisfy the credibility standard, the researcher ensured that the interpretation process and interactions within the borders of the case under investigation was sufficiently in-depth to highlight



any complexity the case mobilizes (Research Methods, 2006; McKay, 2006; Conrad and Serlin, 2005).

Second, in case study research, transferability must be useful in clarifying another context if it is to be considered transferable; that is, the study should be applicable to another setting or group. In case study research, the study under investigation needs to be relevant to other studies in similar situations, especially those with similar research questions or problems of practice (Conrad and Serlin, 2005; McKay, 2006). The researcher ensured (by using valid methodology) that the results derived from this study can be transferred or generalized to other study in the media and risk field and conflict study with similar case study. The lessons from this case study research can be used as recommendation that can apply to future research with similar background (Research Methods, 2000; Conrad and Serlin, 2005).

Third, dependability involves accommodating changes in the research design and area being investigated. 'This occurs as the understanding of the researcher becomes more refined over the course of data collection (and even during analysis, which occurs, in part, concurrently with collection)' (Conrad and Serlin, 2005; 416). Marshall and Rossman acknowledge that in qualitative study the social world is created and the idea of replication is itself problematic (1999 in Conrad and Serlin, 2005, also see Research Methods, 2006). However, in case study research, research questions evolve in response to emerging data, with the researcher perhaps reconstructing or removing preliminary questions and adding others. Putting this into consideration, the researcher ensured that references are made to changes over time when reporting results. According to Miles and Huberman, dependability in qualitative research is the process of consistency and stability of a study over time and across researchers and methods (1994 in Conrad and Serlin, 2005). To ensure dependability in this research, the researcher adopted the following measures. The research questions matched the study design. The role and status of the researcher was explicitly explained before the interview [see, appendix, II]. Findings from the study depicted the data source. Data across the areas of study and target population for this study was collected. Information from respondents was selected

according to the theoretical need of the research and the amount of data collected respectively (for more see, Conrad and Serlin, 2005).

Fourth, confirmability in qualitative study refers to the extent to which the findings could be confirmed by others. Thus, to enhance confirmability in this study the researcher documented the procedures for checking data throughout the study (Research Methods, 2006).

### **3.7 (iii) INAPPROPRIATE USE OF INFORMATION**

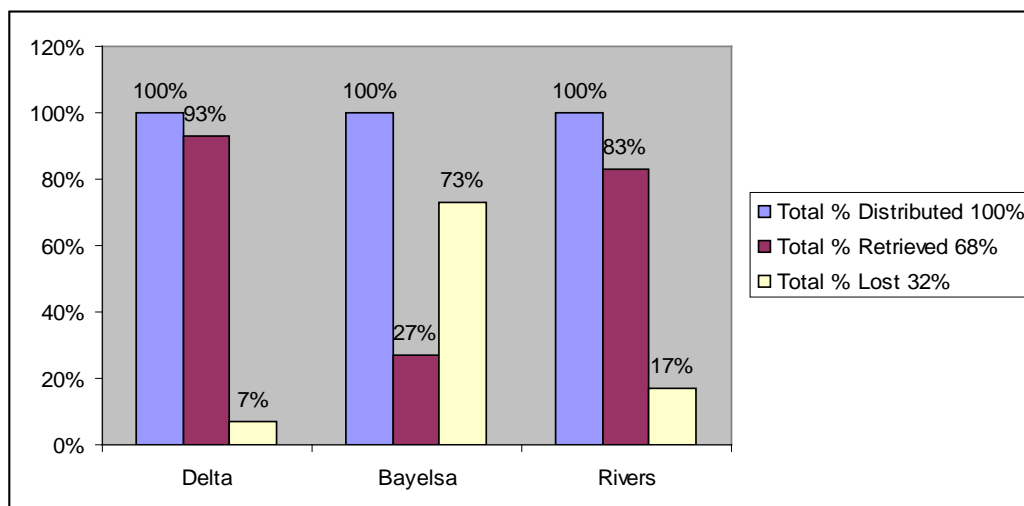
Inappropriate use of information in research can cause harm directly or indirectly to the respondent, which is termed unethical in research. The researcher considered and settled issues that can cause adverse harm to the study population. It is ethical to use correct and appropriate information to avoid misrepresentation and harm of the study population (Kumar, 2005).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study are analysed and represented in this chapter. The results from the quantitative data are discussed as they are represented and analysed in bar charts respectively. However, the quantitative and qualitative data results were put together and referred to each other in the analysis to compensate the flaws and blind spots of each single method (Flick, 2002). The total number of questionnaires used for this study is eight hundred and eleven out of the one thousand two hundred that were distributed and the number of interviews conducted and used for this study is ten. This chapter is divided into section A and B due to the design of the questionnaire. Section A entails analysed personal information from respondents such as gender, age, place of residence and profession and section B consists of analysed research questions that respondents attended to. Furthermore, some research questions in section B are in open-ended format. See appendix one for design of questionnaire.

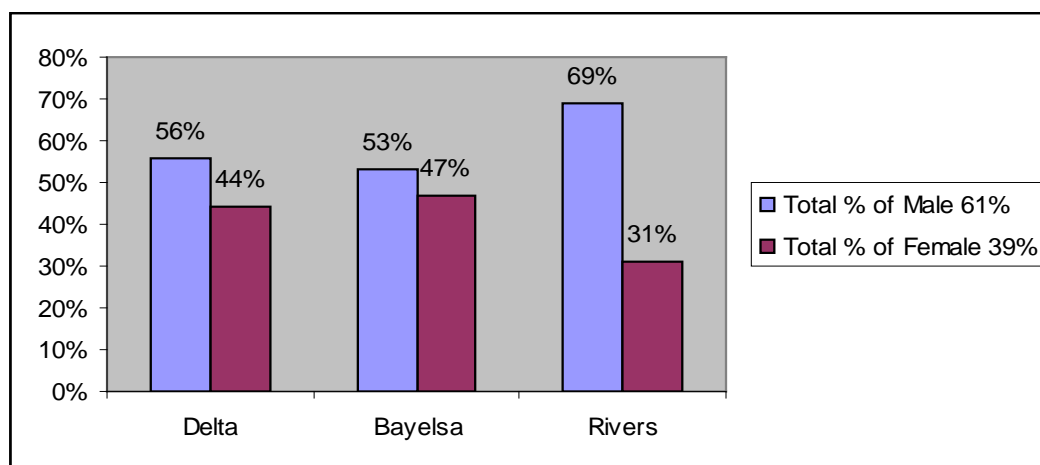
**FIGURE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES DISTRIBUTED, RETRIEVED AND LOST ACROSS THE THREE STATES USED FOR THIS RESEARCH – DELTA, BAYELSA AND RIVERS**



## ANALYSIS:

It will be seen from the above chart that Delta and Rivers State had a higher response rate than Bayelsa State. The reason for the low response rate in Bayelsa State was due to lack of time and finance. First, time was indeed a crucial factor that did not permit the researcher to follow up the remaining questionnaires in Bayelsa State [292] because the researcher had to meet already scheduled interview appointments in Delta and Rivers State, which left the researcher with very limited time to visit Bayelsa State for more retrieval of questionnaires and the researcher had less than a week to return to the UK. Second, it will be worth saying here that the researcher initially planned twelve weeks for the research field work, however, due to financial constraints, the researcher had to cut down the field work trip to eight weeks. This, of course, affected the retrieval of questionnaires in Bayelsa State. However, the low response rate in Bayelsa State will not affect the representativeness of the results in this study as it will be seen from the chart that the overall retrieval of questionnaires from Delta, Bayelsa and River State combined is above 50% which is indeed commendable and can adequately represent the total population.

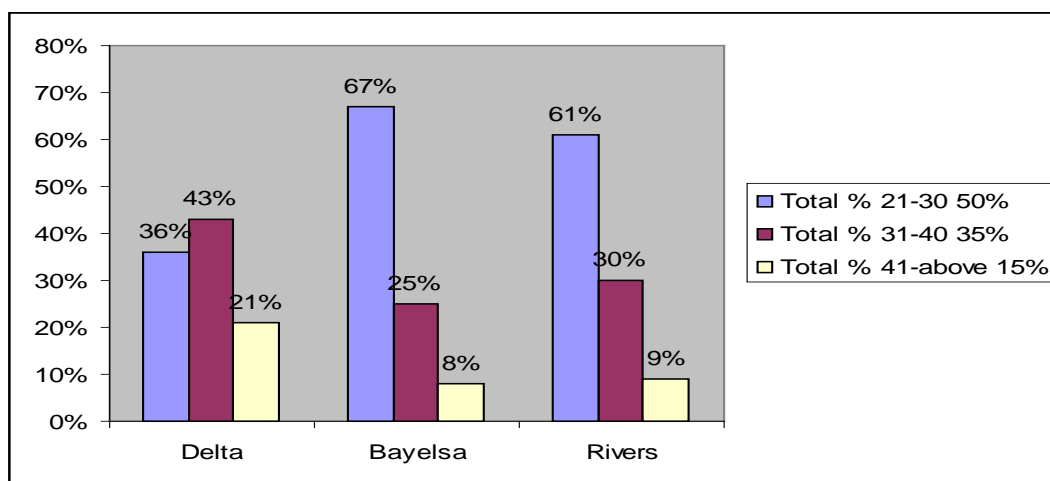
**FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER**



### ANALYSIS:

The above chart shows male participated more than female in this study, it is also evident that the survey was not clustered solely around a particular gender. However, there is quite a difference between gender representations as revealed in the above chart. One of the challenges the researcher encountered during the distribution of questionnaires in the three states was that male respondents were more responsive than female respondents. Despite this challenge, the researcher made sure that females were represented. It will be seen in Delta and Rivers State that the percentage between male and female is less compared to Bayelsa State. If more questionnaires were retrieved in Bayelsa State, perhaps the overall percentage between male and female would have been narrowed.

**FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE**

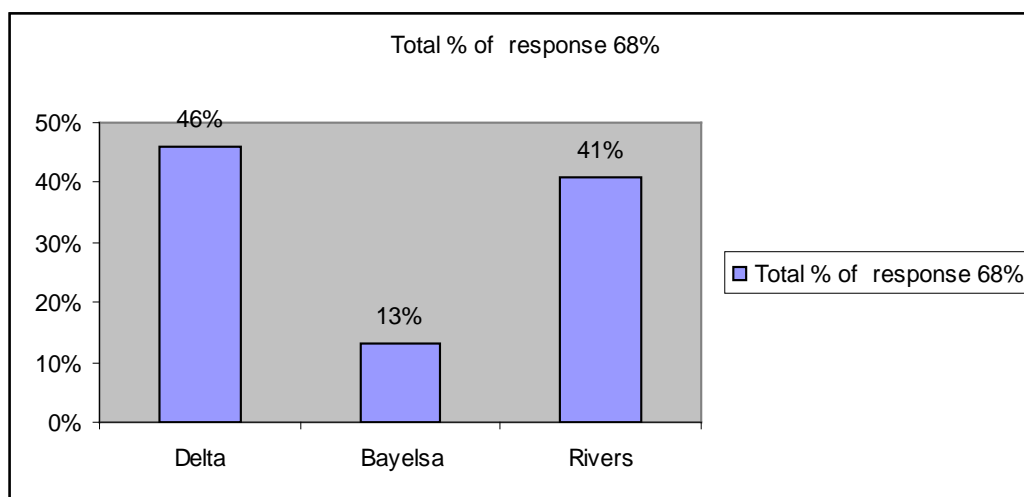


### ANALYSIS:

It can be revealed from the above chart that during the survey for this study, the researcher distributed the questionnaires fairly across all age groups in the three states in order to acquire information from different age perspective. However, the age and gender of the total sample reflect the age and gender characteristics of the population of Nigeria. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report (2010), the age and gender

percentage structure of Nigerians between 0-14years: 41.5% (male 31, 624, 050 / female 30, 242, 637), while 15-64 years: 55.5% (male 42, 240, 641 / female 40, 566, 672) and 65 years and above: 3.1% (male 2,211, 840 / female 2, 343, 250). Estimated life expectancy at birth: total population 47.24 years (CIA, 2010).

**FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY LOCATION**

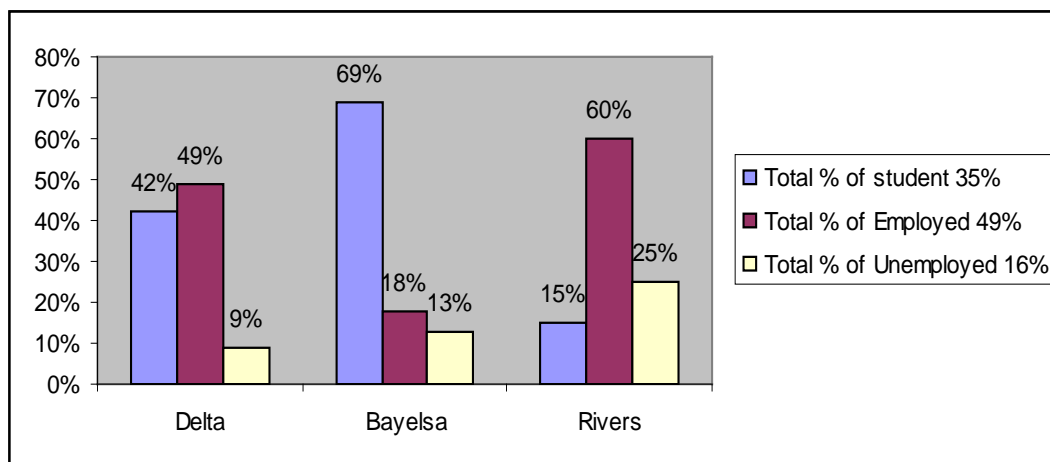


#### **ANALYSIS:**

The above chart implies that respondents in Delta State responded higher than respondents in Bayelsa State and Rivers State. With specific reference to surveys in less developed countries, response rate is usually problematic especially when using slow and unreliable postal system, telephone, internet based, fax and relatively low standard of research support infrastructure. One technique used in avoiding low response rate in less developed countries is the drop and collect survey technique which the researcher adopted during the field work of this study. The drop and collect survey involves the researcher and / or trained field work assistants in personally allocating and later collecting the instrument used for the survey [questionnaire] either directly from the target respondents or indirectly via a nominee or gatekeeper. This method usually delivers a higher response rates of 50% and above (Goliath, 2004). It is indeed plausible

from the above chart that the response rate is high, perhaps if not for time and financial constraints the response rate would have been higher than 68%.

**FIGURE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY PROFESSION**



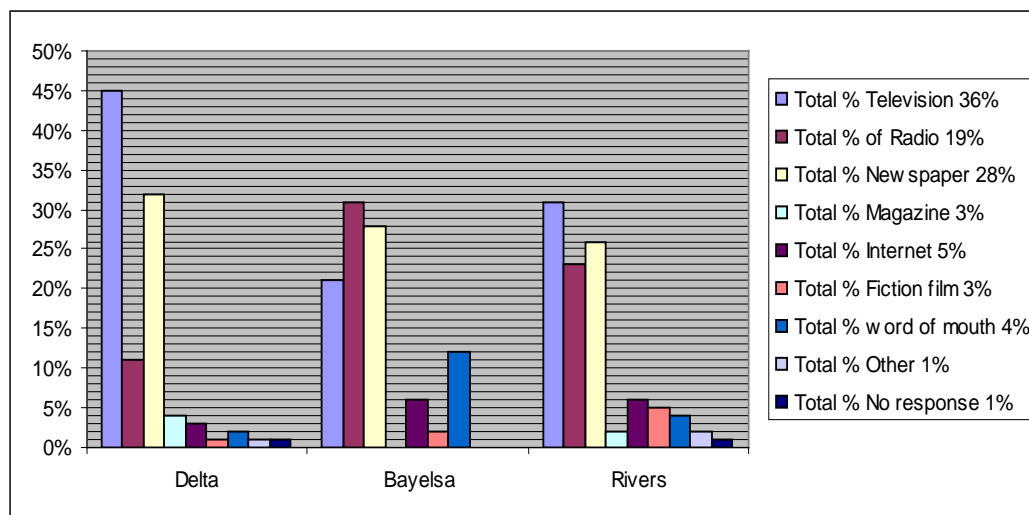
#### **ANALYSIS:**

The above chart implies that the survey was not clustered around a particular profession [skilled and unskilled] and location in the three states rather the survey covered a larger region in each state in order to gain more insight into different professional / unskilled understanding of what this study invokes. It will be worth noting here that the reason why there is a high proportion of students in Delta and Bayelsa State is that students were more responsive than unemployed. Students used for this study in Delta and Bayelsa State were from tertiary institutions and adult school of learning. This, of course, does not limit the sample because respondents were asked if they were knowledgeable about the Niger Delta conflict before questionnaires were administered.

## SECTION B

**Question 1: Which is most important to you when getting information on the Niger Delta crisis?**

**CHART 1**



### **ANANLYSIS:**

The above finding reveals that individuals prefer to get information from television stations more than any other means of communication. The broadcast journalist interviewed for this study acknowledged that most individuals in Nigeria and other countries have no habit of reading, but prefer to listen because of tight work schedules (Interview, July, 2009). However, television stations are used more than any other means of communication in Nigeria and also have a wider network coverage (Musa and Mohammed, 2004). It is particularly revealing and encouraging that newspaper organizations have done a lot to attract readers despite the challenges faced in newspaper production in terms of accessibility to rural areas, funding capacity, literacy level and economic situation in Nigeria, which of course, brings the problem of access as the print media are forced to print limited copies they can conveniently sell (Olusola, 2008). According to the broadcast journalist, in interview:



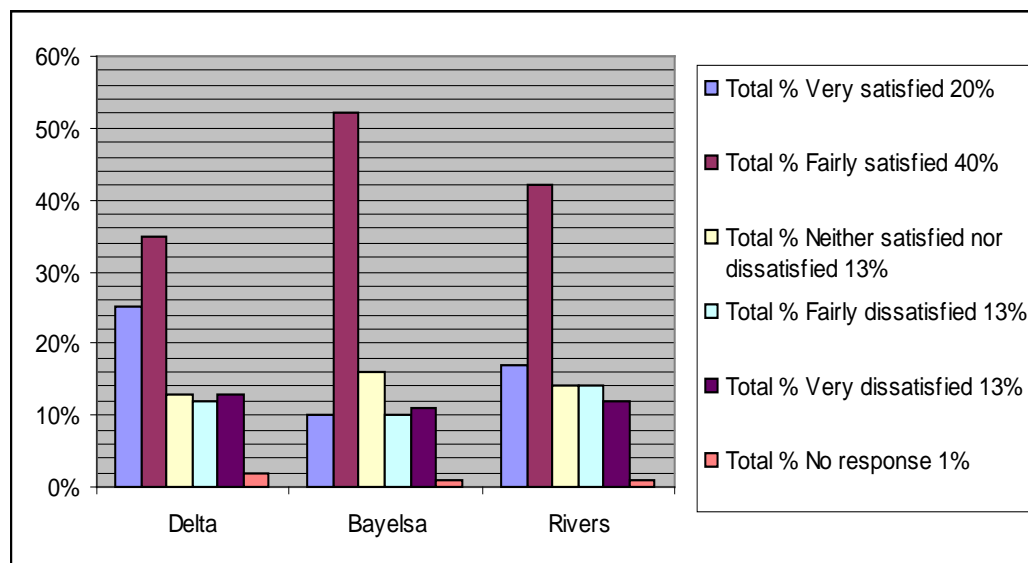
‘story that sell is what the media go for, what obtains in Britain is what is obtained in Nigeria, we have this no culture of reading, people prefer to listen more to radio than reading newspapers because they don’t have time, for media to sell, their story must be away from the ordinary, it must be exclusive, so they write sensational reports and headlines to draw the attention of the people, it goes beyond the normal news reporting, story must be put in such a way that it will attract the reader’ (Interview, July, 2009).

The use of radio might be interpreted as an encouraging sign, perhaps symptomatic of a genuine embracing of the technology’s scope for information gathering and dissemination. The use of internet by individuals to get information is relatively low as shown in the above chart; this might be due to accessibility problem, which remains a major challenge for urban and rural communities in Nigeria (IREX, 2007). The above chart shows that magazine does not seem to interest individuals when getting information on the Niger Delta crisis. The economic climate of Nigeria may not permit low income earners to afford magazines and accessibility is relatively low especially in rural areas (Olusola, 2008). The above chart reveals that very few individuals get information from fiction film, this shows that fiction films does not appeal to most individuals when getting information on the Niger Delta conflict. Wahlberg and Sjoberg (2000) note that films are not popular in depicting risk issues and this is evident in the Niger Delta context. Word of mouth and others are relatively low, this shows that individuals prefer to consult established institutions for information as shown in the above chart.

Overall, the above chart reveals that the television, radio and newspaper remains essential to the political process and the engine room where battles over defining, identification, conflict and risk management are fought out and brought to public knowledge in the Nigeria’s Niger Delta context (Bourdieu, 1998).

**Question 2: In general, how satisfied are you with media reporting and coverage on the Niger Delta crisis?**

**CHART 2**



**ANALYSIS:**

It is indeed plausible that the Nigerian media are actually reporting the Niger Delta conflict as shown in the above chart but what differs here are respondent's level of satisfaction. The three journalists interviewed for this study; acknowledged that the media has done a lot to bring the Niger Delta crisis to the world's attention but there are other factors that may hinder journalists' performance which has serious implications for audience satisfaction with the media (Interview, Print, Broadcast and NTA Journalist, July, 2009).

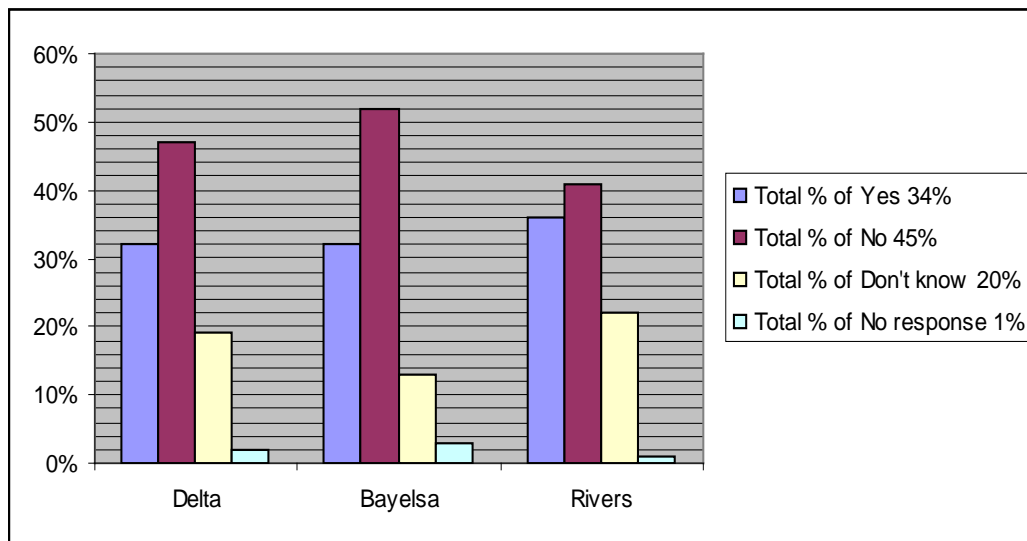
First, lack of access to information; the journalist from broadcast media acknowledged that information sought for by journalists from the government and oil companies is always very difficult to obtain (Interview, Broadcast Journalist, July, 2009). Accordingly, the journalist from the print media notes that until the freedom of information bill is past into law, government and oil companies will continue to withhold vital information

(Interview, Print Journalist, July, 2009). Second, media inaccuracy; it will be recalled from the literature review that Ashong and Udodo (2008) acknowledged that journalists' commitment to truth and balance may not at all parallel actual risk / conflict occurrences because most media correspondents are not always on hand to cover these occurrences the way they have occurred. On such occasions, journalists get their fact-findings and reports from government sources, people involved or multinational companies; as such, fairness may always be elusive to all parties involved in the incident. The journalist from NTA gave an instance of some print journalists that did not visit Gbaramatu kingdom in Delta State but heard about government military operation in the community from people involved, the print journalists wrote a story about complete destruction of the community but when the state governor and his entourage got to the community, they discovered the story was over exaggerated (Interview, NTA Journalist, July, 2009). The journalist from the print media also gave another scenario where journalists went to the creeks in Warri, Delta State, hearing that there was a crisis in a village. Nobody saw the number of deaths, five different newspapers gave different figures of deaths; however, no newspaper reported the same number of deaths (Interview, July, 2009). The broadcast journalist notes that reports will not be balanced if journalists do not have quick access to the conflict zones (Interview, Broadcast Journalist, July, 2009). Third, media type is also a determinant factor; commercial interests of the private media outfit have made them unproductive in carrying out their responsibility in a democratic society. The media must first thrive as a business before considering public interest and service. In Nigerian, the private media outfits have become inactive leaving the independent press open to personal monopoly for the owner's gain and government owned media are mere loud speakers and propaganda machines for the government in power (Agbese, 2006; Olusola, 2008). The journalist from NTA which is a national government outfit notes that 'we are all just machines because this media agency is every government organ and we have to follow a phase' (Interview, July, 2009). In addition, the print and broadcast journalists made known that in every media outfit the proprietor matters a lot especially when dealing with the Niger Delta conflict as it is deemed sensitive (Interview with Print and Broadcast Journalist, July, 2009).

On the one hand, taking onboard the factors that affect media performance on the Niger Delta conflict as explained above and on the other, how it affects audience satisfaction, the researcher concludes that the media is actually covering the Niger Delta conflict but not enough to essentially give audience the satisfaction they desire as there are still factors that hinder journalist access to information which in turn affect media performance. It will be seen from the above chart that 40 percent, which is the highest, said they were fairly satisfied. However, if the Nigerian media can cross the impediment confronting them from getting appropriate information, there might be an increase in respondents being very satisfied but if these issues are left unattended, perhaps, respondents' satisfaction might even decrease from very satisfied and fairly satisfied to other levels of dissatisfaction.

**Question 3: Do you think the media has brought the risk of environmental degradation to government attention through heavy media coverage?**

**CHART 3**



**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart reveals that 45% of respondents do not think the media has brought issues of risk to government attention. It will be recalled from the literature review that a journalist interviewed on media performance with regards to the Niger Delta conflict admitted that although the media is reporting the crisis, it is also imperative they draw attention via in-depth and interpretative reporting to the underlying causes [risk issues] of the conflict (Jimoh, 2008). The journalist from the print media notes that to a very large extent there is a handicap in risk reportage and the handicap is that the government sectors are not ready to give journalists information and that is why reportage of environmental degradation is on the low side (Interview, July, 2009). The professor of management science from Bayelsa State interviewed for this study acknowledged that information control on the part of oil companies is problematic because they are not ready to give accurate information about their operations. The professor further acknowledged that the media report physical events that are visible to the eye and such reports occur when there is a major devastation like oil spills, which does not always match the actual consequences of the pollution. The long term effect of risks emanating from pollution which affect human health cannot be precisely measured by the media because there are no effective indicators of environmental quality to monitor and report the issue through the media in the Niger Delta (Interview, Professor, July, 2009).

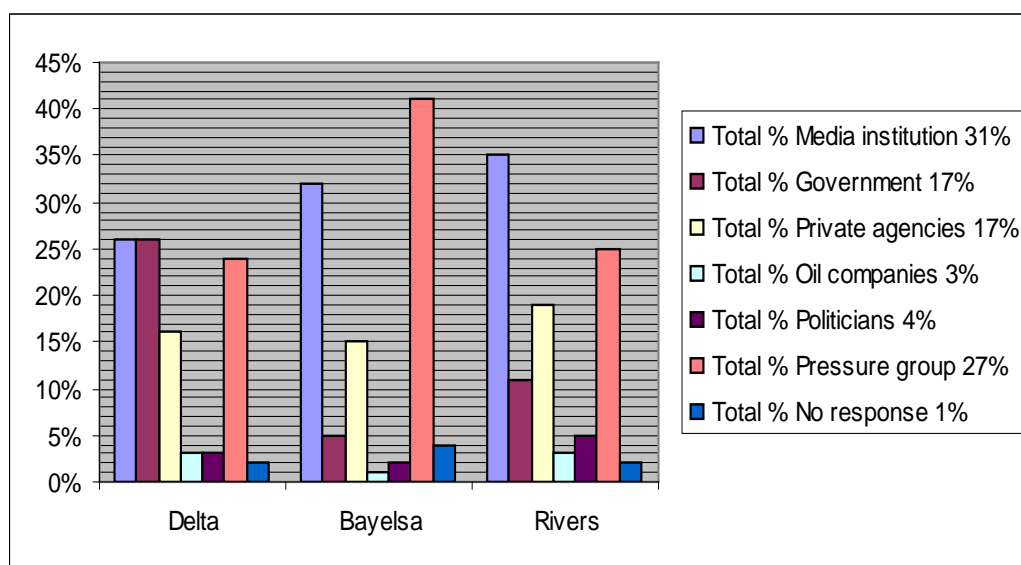
It will be recalled from the literature review that Eldridge and Reilly note that the mass media are unevenly attracted to risk because the mainstream news media are poorly constructed to sustain attention of any specific future threat (2003). When a risk is still hypothetical and there are no proven casualties to interview, a story will be less attractive to news media. This is because journalists are interested in the news of the day. Risk reporting is influenced by the pace at which a threat unfolds and how evidence is marshalled and procedures launched as news events. Thus, the media will focus on events which involve many deaths rather than one that have a growing effect over a long time (Hughes et al, 2006). Eldridge and Reilly (2003: 140) gave three main reasons why the media do not encourage sustained risk coverage. First, risk is uncertain and scientific

evidence is often inconclusive; however, it is controversy, new and definitive findings that attracts the media rather than scientific uncertainty. Second, a risk related event may not be attractive or be of interest to journalist unless government or other official agencies implement policy and precautionary principle. Third, risk is a concept based on future prediction and this is in conflict with the media news agenda that emphasizes the events of the day [fresh news story]. The media tend to ignore hypothetical and distant risk, even when it is a potential threat until the dangers are manifest in some ways.

Against this backdrop, it is indeed evident that the public perceive that Nigerian media report risk events only when it occurs but do not have an in-depth, interpretative and sustained coverage to attract the public and government attention to the implications and consequences of environmental degradation. If the media reportage was heavy and sustained more respondents would have agreed that the media have brought the effects of risk issues to government attention and the number of respondents that did not know would have been far lesser than 20% but on a different scale of media judgement.

**Question 4: Who do you trust to tell the truth on risk events [environmental degradation] linked to the conflict in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 4**



**ANALYSIS:**

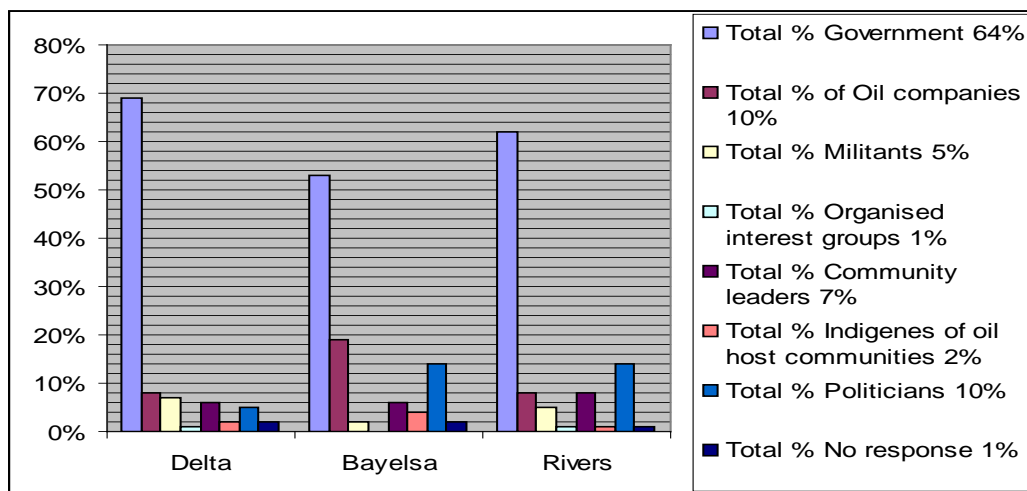
The above chart implies that 31% of respondents, which is the highest, trust the media to tell the truth on risk issues. It is particularly revealing that despite the handicap faced by the Nigerian media in getting accurate information on risk issues from key institutions (Interview, Print Journalist, July, 2009) most individuals in Nigeria still trust the media to tell the truth on risk issues than any other profession linked directly or indirectly to environmental issues and management in the Niger Delta region. Trust for pressure groups is second on the chart which indicates that individuals recognise and trust the effort of legitimate interest groups to convey risk communication. The above chart reveals short supply of trust for government, politicians and private agencies; however, this has serious implications on policy acceptance by the masses. The masses are important players in risk controversies where distrust may lead to rejection of policy decisions (Pidgeon et al, 2003). Thus, abstract system depends upon trust; hence active trust must be won and maintained (Giddens, 1990). Trust for oil companies is the lowest in the chart. It will be recalled from the literature review that in reflexive modernization, societies are becoming more critical of the activities of organised irresponsibility of the industrial era that is systematically accompanied by that of risk, and individuals starts to lose trust trying to measure what is rational and safe, knowing full well that in the industrial phase, risks are industrially manufactured, scientifically justifiable and companies do not pay for their pollution (Beck, 1996b). Thus, risk transformations in developed and developing societies are accompanied with an increasing sense of uncertainty, complexity, ambivalence and disorder, an increasing distrust of traditional authorities and social institutions with a growing knowledge of the threats inherent in everyday life (Lupton, 1999). It is worth noting here that the risk society thesis was developed largely in the west, to explain western nations' responses to living in a risk society. However, Beck in his writing referred to modern risk as a global issue, which generates the awareness of the global nature of risk, triggering new impulses towards the advancement of co-operative international institutions. By these processes, risk society becomes world risk society, in which socio- political debate and action is globalized (1995b: 7; 1996b: 2; see also Lupton, 1999). Nigeria as a nation will respond to risk just

like any other nation in the west and that is one of the reasons why there is conflict in the Niger Delta region.

Research conducted in the UK by BBC, Reuters and Media Centre in 2006 and Mori Poll in 2007 revealed that Nigerians trust their media more than the government. Although, the findings produced similar results in this study, however, it is worth noting here that the former will not be relevant in risk related issues because the question was geared towards institutions with different goal orientation rather than specific institutions that have a stake in risk associated with technological and environmental degradation in Nigeria which this study presents.

**Question 5: Who, in your opinion, should be held responsible for the conflict in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 5**



**ANALYSIS:**

It is particularly revealing that 64% of the respondents held government responsible on grounds of, first; failure to discharge social responsibility in areas of meaningful development, provision of basic amenities, youth empowerment through gainful employment, internship and soft loans. The Professor from Bayelsa State distinguished



government inadequacies on developmental issues between the three tiers of government [federal, state and local]. He acknowledged that federal government had been trying to tackle the Niger Delta problem through the method of interventionist agencies from 1960-2009. However, these interventionist agencies did not do anything to secure development in the Niger Delta region (Interview, Professor, July, 2009). The principal from Rivers State interviewed for this study notes that the developmental problems in the Niger Delta are enormous for these interventionist agencies to handle because they are under funded and these agencies are:

‘just ways used by the new colonialist headed by the Hausa, Fulani’s, Igbos and the Yoruba [four major tribes in Nigeria] to still gimmick the oil producing minorities because the states here are small, the problems of the Niger Delta are enormous’ (Interview, Principal, July, 2009).

It will be recalled from the literature review that the formation of one policy [intervention agency] after another appears to be incremental and ends up suffering from disjointed implementation (Akpan, 2008). The elder statesman interviewed for this study notes that until the federal government practices true fiscal federalism the problem of underdevelopment will remain substantial in the Niger Delta (Interview, July, 2009). The professor notes that mismanagement of government funds is very common at the state level, ‘it is on record that the Niger Delta state governors have actually gotten so much from the federation account, to what extent have they applied it?’ (Interview, July, 2009) According to the principal and writer, various past governors (1999-2007) from the core Niger Delta states have been accused and charged for embezzling the monthly federal allocation given to their states for developmental purposes. [See 2.5.6 for government allocation, page 73]. The principal from Rivers State described the local government as ‘jamborees’ because they share the enormous government allocation within themselves to the detriment of developmental projects in their communities, which the professor also acknowledges (Interview, July, 2009).

Second, Militants are armed by most government officials; some respondents claimed that most government officials elected into office with highest votes provide youths with weapons in order to secure a position in government by rigging elections for them and that these weapons are now used for militancy in the region. Third, failure to enact sincere policies to curb pollution; some respondents note that government have failed to come up with adequate policies to guide the operations of oil companies in the Niger Delta region. The elder statesman in interview notes that regarding the laws concerning oil, government put a lot of them in place 'like the land use decree act, is a law to make the federal government to be in total control of land to the detriment of the people who are in the environment; and you have gas laws, oil laws, none of these laws is to better the life of the people' (Interview, July 2009). Fourth, some respondents blamed government for the violation of fundamental human rights in response to environmental pollution such as: right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, freedom from torture and other physical abuses, self determination, right to life, right to adequate standard of living (Idowu, 1999). It will be recalled from the literature review that human rights violations and environmental conflict in the Niger Delta have been known to be mainly executed by the state and oil multinationals in the region. For example, the killings and destruction of oil host communities like the Odi massacre (2000), Ogoni genocide (1995), the Opia and Ikiyan killings (1999), Yenagoa killing (1998) and others (Okaba, 2004; also see Human Rights Watch, 2002). In summary, the state is held accountable for any act deemed harmful which can be connected to its violation of responsibility under domestic or international law resulting from action or omission by the government of the state or any political subdivision of the state (United Nations, 2005).

Oil companies and politicians were both 10% as shown in the above chart. Reasons respondents gave for holding oil companies responsible is that the oil companies are more concerned with oil exploration and exploitation than the interest of the oil host communities. A respondent from Delta State notes that the oil companies do not have respect for the environment during oil exploration and do not care or show concern over how the degradation affects the health and living standard of the indigenes of the oil host

communities. The elder statesman notes that the oil companies are in the Niger Delta to take away oil, 'they don't care about the damages they are causing to oil producing communities, if you go to different areas of these oil host communities, you will see gas flaring, oil spillage and toxins being buried' (Interview, July, 2009). Accordingly, it is on record that oil companies like Shell and BP have a bad reputation of handling indigenous cultures and local people in their search for oil (Langford et al, 1999). The 10 percent of respondents that held politicians responsible for the Niger Delta conflict accused politicians of paying lip service to the indigenes of oil host communities, failing to pay attention to the Niger Delta problems because they steal the funds meant for development, aiding and abetting government embezzlement and engineering militancy by providing arms and encouraging oil bunkering in the Niger Delta region.

Respondents that held community leaders responsible are relatively few. Reasons respondents gave for holding them responsible was that most community leaders are corrupt, limited by education, mislead the oil companies to the detriment of their community by enriching themselves, sharing the money meant for compensation and development among themselves. The journalist from the print media notes that Shell invited traditional rulers and community leaders for a meeting and asked what they wanted in their communities:

'some of them preferred to be taken to the United States to spend holiday to the detriment of their people, others said give me the money you want to give to my people, only me will take the money to them, I speak for them so whatever you are going to give, it will pass through me' (Interview, Print Journalist, July, 2009).

The community leader from Delta State interviewed for this study acknowledged that even though oil host communities are undeveloped, community leaders cannot be exonerated from the pressure of what is happening (July, 2009). It can be seen from the above chart that 5% of respondents held militants responsible for the Niger Delta conflict on accounts of disorderly behaviour in the society, breaking the law, damaging pipelines

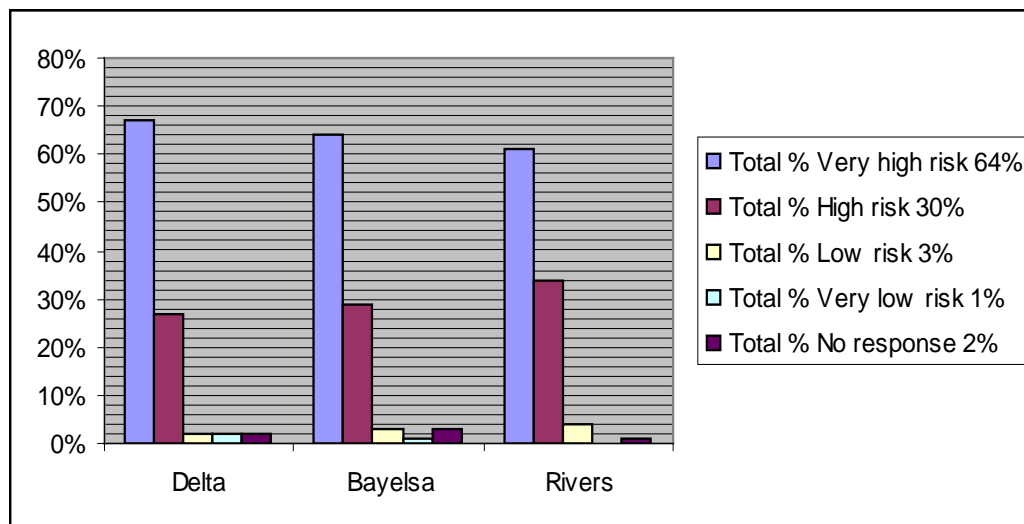
and they made themselves available for politicians and government to use to the detriment of peace in the land. However, despite the shallow and vague articulated agenda of the militants in the region, more than 90% of individuals do not see them as the cause of the Niger Delta conflict. The elder statesman notes that he does not see the youths as militants:

‘I call them freedom fighters because they have been in prison for a long time, they want to free themselves out of the poverty situation. The federal government should have a bearing in oil producing communities, particularly the areas where oil is been produced’ (Interview, July, 2009).

1% of respondents held organized interest groups responsible for the conflict because they see them as individuals who are part of the government, political and militant set up in the region and 2% of respondents held indigenes of oil host communities responsible because they have failed to hold executives and community leaders from their community accountable and also illiteracy among the growing youths in the region.

**Question 6: How do you perceive the risk of environmental degradation caused by oil companies to humans, plants and animals in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 6**



**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart indicates that 64% of respondents perceive the risk of environmental degradation to humans, plants and animals as very high risk. According to the principal, in interview, environmental degradation caused by oil companies has affected land, water and air; sea animals such as fish, lobsters, crab and others can no longer survive the harsh terrain, agricultural products can no longer be produced in large quantity compared to before oil was discovered and indigenes of oil producing communities started experiencing air borne diseases due to polluted environment. The principal also made known that the level of degradation is almost eighty to ninety percent (Interview, July 2009). In addition, the elder statesman notes that:

‘People are dying and nobody knows the type of disease that are affecting them, the man who wakes healthy this morning before night falls you hear he is dead, no good medical facilities being put in place. We are living in a very dangerous environment, what I will call predicament, which the government really needs to take seriously, very serious predicament’ (Interview, July, 2009).

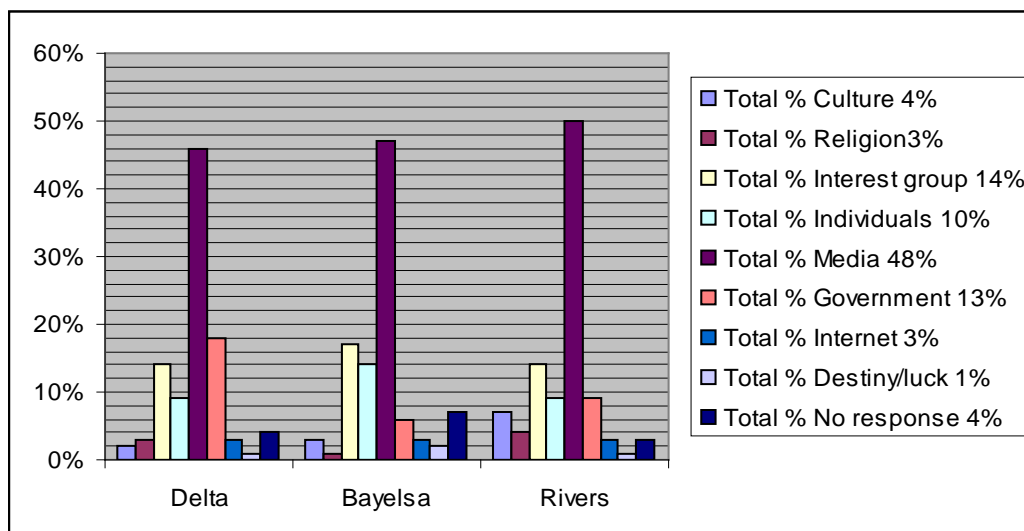
[See 2.5.1, page 57-8 for graphic image on environmental degradation].

It will be recalled from the literature review that Beck’s work on the risk society demonstrates that the production of wealth has been accompanied by that of risks as an outcome of modernization. Beck also acknowledges that industrial societies have become risk societies in late modernity (Beck, 1992b: 19). Beck claims that risks associated with industrial societies are irreversible threats to mankind, plants and animals. The nature of modern risk cannot be measured spatially, temporally and socially; and that individuals in industrial societies are constantly faced with threats on an unprecedented scale which is often open-ended, rather than occurrences which have a foreseeable end (Beck, 1995b:13; 1992b: 13-23). Controversies over risk issues in industrialized countries have begun to dominate public, private and political spheres (Lupton, 1999). According to Beck, it may

be argued that in late industrialism the obsession with the idea of risk has its foundations in the transformation of societies from pre-industrialism to early industrialism to late industrialism (Beck 1992b: 3; see also Lupton 1999). Giddens termed late industrialism as risk culture, thereby distinguishing it from previous eras because risk awareness in late industrialism is linked to the threats associated with human activities (1991: 3). According to Lupton from cultural perspective on risk, the society or laypeople's responses to risk should not be seen as biased if they are different from expert assessment. Rather, their use and value within a particular cultural context needs to be acknowledged (1999: 37). Furthermore, culture does not only aid society in calculating risk but also adds to a mutual rather than an individualistic concept of risk, taking into account communal responsibility and expectations. Society uses its shared, accumulated knowledge to 'determine which foreseeable losses are most probable, which probable losses will be most harmful, and which harms may be preventable' (Lupton, 1999: 38).

**Question 7: Who precisely, would you say, most shapes your awareness about the risk of environmental degradation caused by oil companies in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 7**



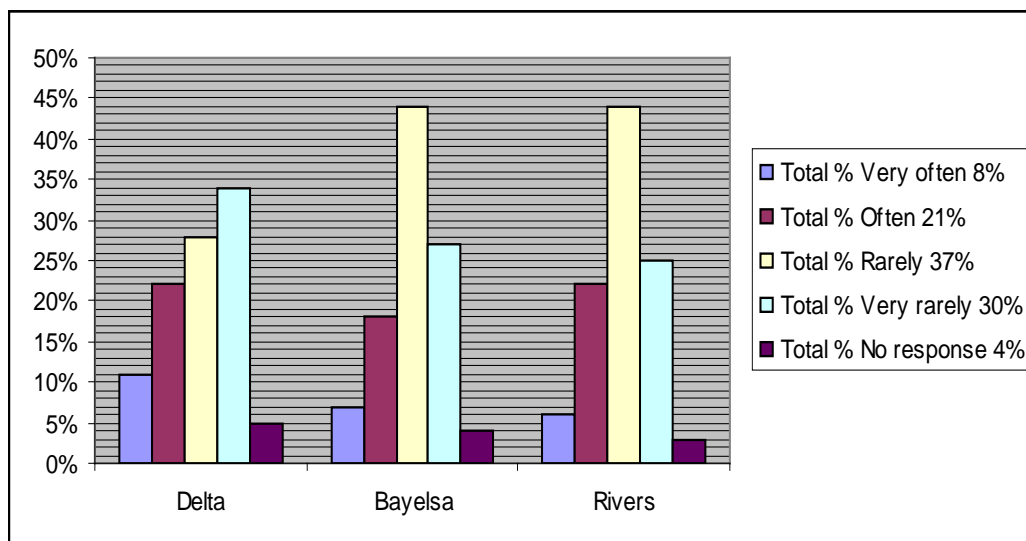
**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart reveals that the media shapes the awareness of 48% respondents. Overwhelmingly, the media are the most important factor in shaping people's risk awareness. The main reasons respondents gave is that the media disseminate adequate information on risk, educate on health and safety, show live coverage of oil spills and enlighten the populace on risk related issues. Interest groups shape the awareness of 14% respondents. The reasons respondents gave is that interest groups give situation reports on the sharp practices going on in the oil sector, they are most vibrant in disseminating information about the risk of environmental degradation, they speak for the people in the oil producing communities, they educate people about the dangers of environmental degradation and they are indigenes of oil host communities. Government shapes the awareness of 13% respondents. The reasons are that the government represent the people at federal, state and local government level, they have the mechanisms to execute such awareness especially through the environmental agencies and it is the government the people cry to for help when ever there is environmental degradation in their community. Individuals shape 10% of respondents' awareness of risk. The reasons respondents gave for their choice of answer is that they get information on risk from individuals who are experts, individuals who are family members and friends that live in the oil host communities and from individuals in school, seminars and through publications. Culture [tradition] shapes 4% of respondents' awareness about the risk of environmental degradation. The reason respondents gave is that community consultation and activities shapes their risk awareness. It will be recalled from the literature review that these concerns are basically cultural rather than individual because individual choices are usually not independent especially about big political issues, they come already prepared with culturally learned assumptions and weightings when faced with estimating probability and credibility (Douglas, 1992). Culture does not only assist individuals calculate risks but also add to a mutual rather than an individualistic concept of risk, taking into account communal responsibility and expectations. Religion shapes 3% of respondents' awareness. The reasons respondents gave was that they get information through other members of their religious group. The internet shapes 3% of respondents'

awareness. The reason respondents gave is that they get detailed information with graphics and any information they need is on the internet. However, the reason why the researcher designated the internet as a separate category from the media is that internet usage in Nigeria is still on the low side. Thus, the researcher deemed it necessary to obtain a full account of other forms of media usage by respondents when getting information on risk issues as they are more prevalent than the internet especially in places used for this research. 1% of respondents' awareness is shaped by destiny and luck.

**Question 8: How often does the media offer indigenes of oil host communities the opportunity to partake in a public debate with policy makers on environmental degradation in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 8**



**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart shows that 37% of respondents' opinion went for rarely and 30% of respondents' judgment went for very rarely. This shows that the media have not done enough to resuscitate the Nigerian public sphere on the Niger Delta conflict. It will be recalled from the literature review that the concept of public sphere is directed to the issues of how and to what extent the mass media can help individuals learn about their



environment, create an independent forum for public debate, thereby enabling the formation of public opinion to keep the state in check and also help citizens to reach informed political choices on issues of societal and personal interest (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991).

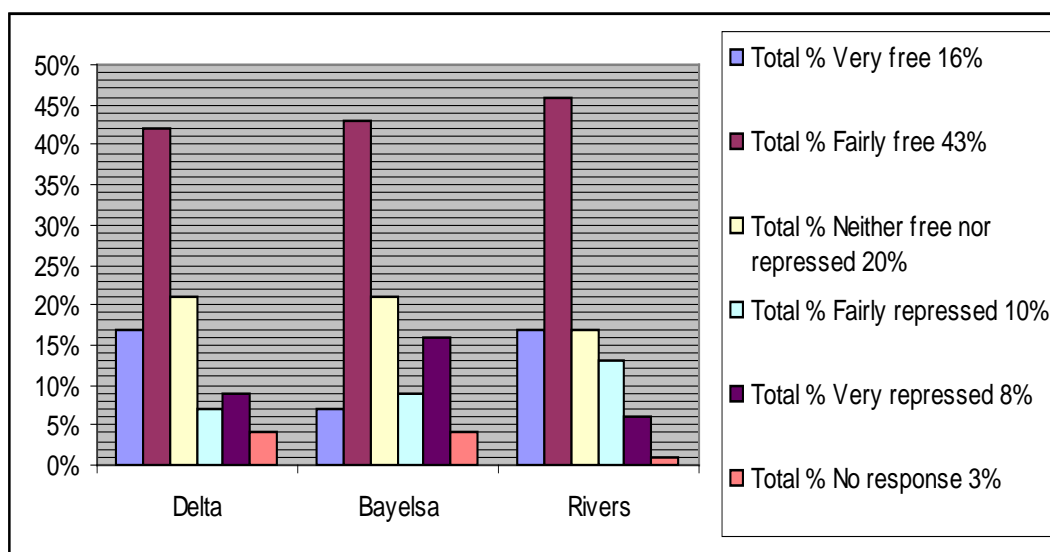
In interview, the broadcast journalist notes that the government and oil companies normally organize workshops, town hall meetings and sensitization visits to oil host communities to let them know of their activities, however, it is not too frequent because it is only when there is problem they 'embark on this fire brigade approach of trying to call the people together and sensitize them'. Furthermore, the broadcast journalist notes that the media organises workshops twice a year because they give indigenes of oil host communities the opportunity to partake in public debate, some oil companies do it once a year and the government do it more often than even the oil companies (Interview, Broadcast Journalist, July, 2009). It will be recalled from the literature review that the media have reduced citizens to passive audience observers rather than active. This is because representatives such as political groups, academic experts, professionals, ordinary citizens, pressure groups, journalists and a centralised electronic media, began to dominate and influence the flow of information and public opinion, which the media use to provide information and surrogate debate for citizens to make decision and vote (Butsch, 2007). Habermas described this process as re-feudalisation of the public sphere (representative publicity), because the essential organisation of the public sphere (media) is controlled by the state and commercial institutions (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991; Colhoun, 1992; Bakir and Barlow, 2007). The decline in public sphere was as a result of the growth of popular press and the drive for profit by media institutions, which eradicated active citizenship as it no longer offered citizens opportunity to partake in rational debate (Bakir and Barlow, 2007).

To understand why the public sphere is not working in Nigeria's Niger Delta conflict situation, this study paid closer attention to the trust relationships sustained between the publics, media, politicians, government and economic power holders like oil multinationals. This study revealed that Nigerians trust their media based on trust in risk

communication while trust in politicians, government and oil companies is in short supply. However, despite trust in media, it will be seen from the above chart that the media has not done enough to encourage public debate on risk issues. According to the broadcast journalist, politicians, government and oil companies seldom encourage the public sphere except when there is a problem (Interview, July, 2009). This shows that the process of public sphere is far from ideal in Nigeria's Niger Delta context due to the complex nature of modern societies and the inevitable role the media play in the economic sphere to survive (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). It is indeed plausible that Habermas' rendition of the decline of the public sphere in the west concurs with the Nigerian context.

**Question 9: How would you categorise press freedom in present day democracy in Nigeria?**

**CHART 9**



**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart shows that 43% of respondents which is the highest acknowledged that the press is fairly free and next on the chart was 20% of respondents which note that the

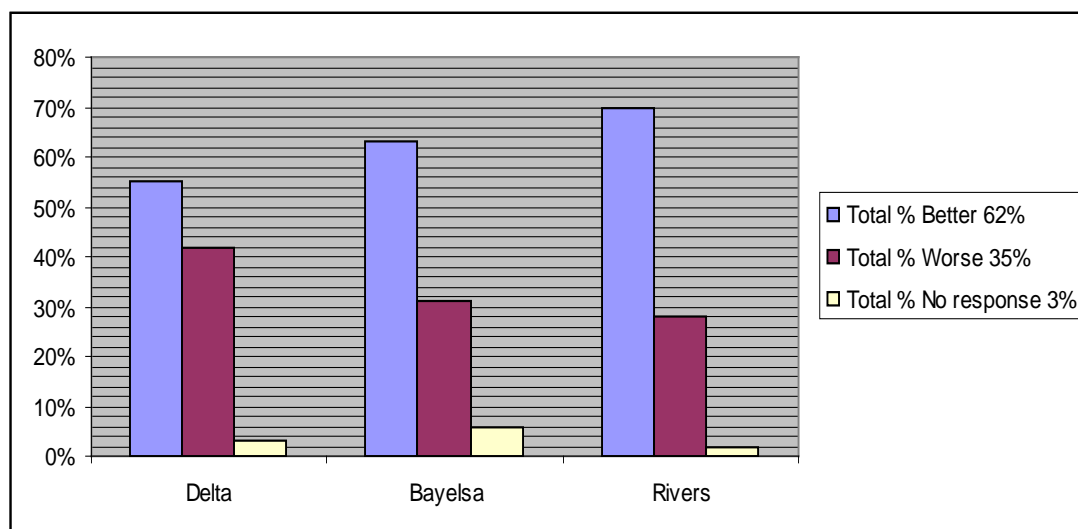
press is neither free nor repressed. It will be recalled from the literature review that the type of political system existing in Nigeria at a given time can also determine the degree of press freedom that exists (Agbese, 2006). However, media fared significantly better under the previous democratic government headed by Obansajo (1999-2007) than they had during the preceding sixteen years of military regime. Yet, during the Obansajo administration journalists were not entirely free. The Obansajo government retained repressive practices used by the military to suppress journalists, and the media experienced different forms of attack during his leadership such as, assault, detention, confiscation of copies of news publications and injustices meant to suppress the media. Subsequent democratic president late Yar'Adua who took over power from Obansajo May 29, 2007 indicated to sign into law the freedom of information bill, which the Obansajo government rejected. In other words, this bill will liberate and give Nigerian citizens, including media, a right of access to public information (IREX, 2007). According to the journalist from the print media, the federal government is still sleeping on the information bill because the government sees journalists as their enemies and also government officials have something to hide from the public. Furthermore, 'as government continue to have vote of six, secret acts and others, they are laws that are holding back from signing into law the freedom of information bill, as long as these laws continue to reflect in our status quo, we cannot talk about this bill'. Thus, as long as government continue to withhold certain information, we cannot talk of press freedom (Interview, Print Journalist, July, 2009).

In interview, the broadcast journalist notes that the press is a little bit better in democratic setting than it was during the military regime but in total the press is not free. The broadcast journalist rated the degree of press freedom as 80% because repression is still there in terms of closing down of media houses (Interview, July, 2009). It will be recalled from the literature that the government set up the Nigerian Broadcast Commission (NBC) as a regulatory body to control and monitor the media. This study identified two loopholes the government uses to repress the media through the NBC; first, the president and minister for information have the power to revoke and issue licence to private broadcasters, which does not conform to the stated requirement for broadcast licence.

This process is neither fair nor competitive but unclear and not open to public scrutiny as the president does not give reasons for denial and applicants have no recourse to judicial review or appeal. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain on this occasion what considerations come into play before licences are approved (IREX, 2007). Second, the power to revoke broadcast licenses, the defect of this decree is that the commission can revoke licenses of broadcast stations that do not function in harmony with code and in the public interest, without specifying ‘how to seek redress or to what the public interest is, as in the American Federal Communication Commission. Thus, the decree allows the NBC to provide licenses in perpetuity only to withdraw them at whim’ (Nwachuku, 1998: 1). According to the NTA journalist, in interview, press freedom is a ‘white elephant project’, everybody desires it but nobody wants to make it happen, press freedom is still floating, as journalists we do as much as we can and leave the rest to fate’ (Interview, July, 2009).

**Question 10: Do you think press freedom has actually become better or worse since democracy was installed in Nigeria?**

**CHART 10**

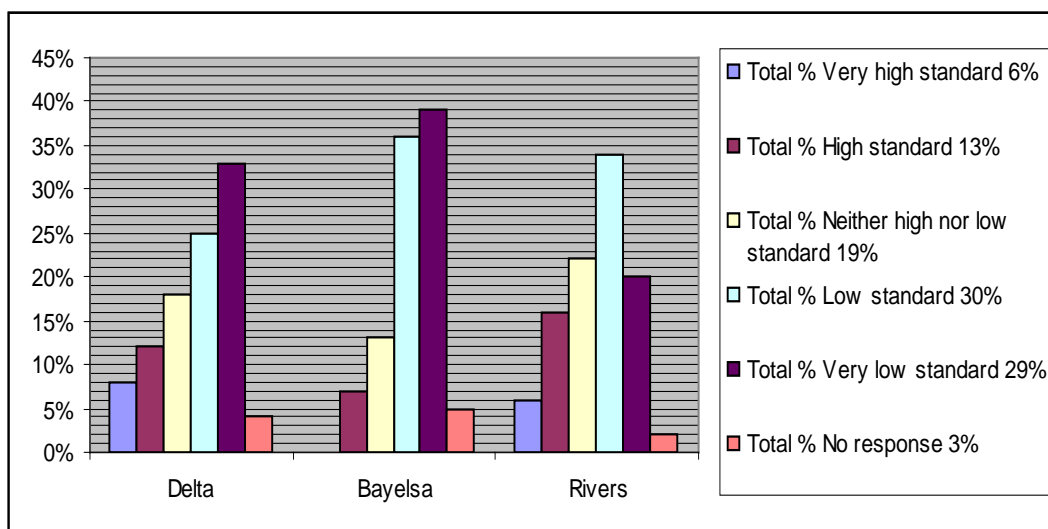


## ANALYSIS:

It is indeed plausible from the above chart that the press has become better since the installation of democracy in Nigeria. According to the broadcast journalist, press in democratic settings is far better than what they used to obtain in the military era, then state owned media were public relation organs of government because journalists wrote what military officers wanted them to write. The broadcast journalist also acknowledged the growth of Nigerian press both in print and electronic media sector citing examples of how the press reveal activities of fraudulent politicians, top government officials and how the state owned media now constructively criticize government operations in the society. The broadcast journalist notes that the press is not entirely free from repression; however, it has indeed become better (Interview, July 2009).

### **Question 11: How would you rate the environmental standard of operation by oil companies in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 11**



**ANALYSIS:**

It can be seen from the above chart that the two highest percentages of respondents' rate the environmental standard of operation by oil companies as low and very low standard. It is indeed plausible from respondents' ratings that the environmental standard by oil companies is very far from ideal and does not meet the safety standard stated by the Stockholm conference 1972, which states that mankind has a fundamental right to freedom, right to dignity that permits adequate conditions of life in an environment of quality, right to equality and well being. It will be recalled from the literature review that each stage of oil exploration activities in the Niger-Delta has left most oil host communities impoverished due to oil leaks amounting to thousands of barrels of oil spilled into the environment, deep sea disposal of poisonous substances and air pollution by constant gas flaring into the atmosphere have left land, air and water unbearable for the inhabitants to cope with (Idris, 2007; Ransome-Kuti, 2007). Over the last fifty years, the Niger-Delta has experienced 1.5 million tons of crude oil spills from multinationals oil ventures (Igbikiowubo, 2006). The Nigerian ministry for environment, housing and urban development recorded a total of one thousand, two hundred and sixty oil spills between 2006 and 2008 (Ochayi and Okereke, 2008; Lawal et al, 2008). Accordingly, the staff of state ministry of environment interviewed for this study acknowledged that a good number of degradation occur as when not predicted (Interview, July, 2009) and also the policy maker in state environment committee [legislative arm of government] interviewed for this study notes that the environment is in a very bad state (Interview, July, 2009). In interview, the elder statesman made known that the oil companies are in Nigeria's Niger Delta region to take away the oil and leave the people with nothing, they are not concerned about the damages they cause in oil producing communities, the oil companies are not making effort to bring conducive environment to the oil host communities rather they are always polluting the environment and that is one of the reasons why indigenes of oil host communities will continue to act. According to the elder statesman, 'Oil production is a curse and not a blessing to the people of the Niger Delta rather it is a set back to the life of the people' (Interview, July, 2009).

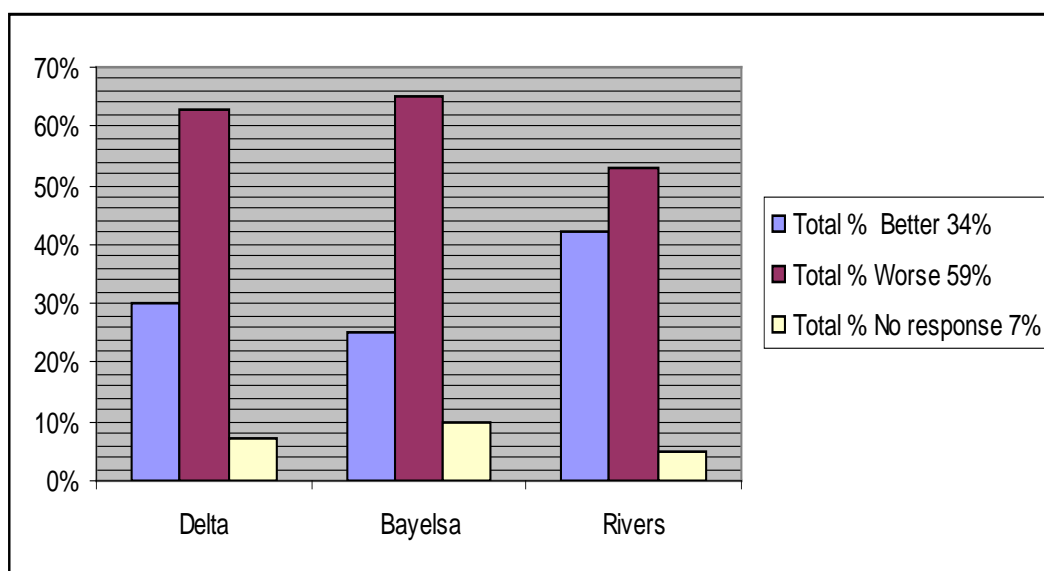
The level of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta as shown in the above chart raises the question of how environmental laws are being enforced in Nigeria. In interview, the staff of ministry of environment note that 'to some extent the laws are there, but it is the implementation that is some how a little bit faulty because they are not hundred percent adhered to' (Interview, July, 2009). The ministry of environment staff also acknowledged that there are federal, state and local government environmental laws; however, the oil companies oblige the federal laws more because they feel the federal government is supreme and whatever law they formulate takes care of the state and local government (Interview, Staff of State Ministry of Environment, July, 2009). The policy maker, in interview, cited a case of oil spill by Agip in 2003 at Abalagada in Ndokwa east in Delta State, that it was almost impossible to bring Agip to Delta State House of Assembly because these oil companies are aware that the nation's economy depends on oil revenue and they may decide not to comply with state laws and the federal government will at every point back their action. Even when these laws are put together, if the oil companies are threatening to leave, there is a possibility that the federal government will ask them to stay. There is little or nothing policy makers can effectively put in place because oil exploration is an exclusive thing. The state now acts as a referee between the oil companies and oil host communities whenever there is dispute over environmental degradation (Interview, Policy Maker, July, 2009). Robinson notes that since most environmental protection laws are passed through procedures of domestic legislative arm of government, the effectiveness of the implementation of these laws can only be measured by the potency of a country's rule of law, its economic capability and the uprightness of its administrative regime (2003).

It will be recalled from the literature review that countries must ensure its citizens have the right to a healthy environment. That is, with regards to exploring natural resources, countries must exercise due diligence (Stockholm Conference, 1972), to ensure that its activities do not impact negatively on the environment of neighbouring states and its citizens (Rosenne, 1991; Crawford, 2002). Accordingly, a breach in the provision of the treaty or non observance by the state would be seen by international community as an abuse of sovereignty (Science Direct, 2004) and the state can be held responsible not only

for their acts or failure to act with respect to their responsibility to protect their environment under international law, also for the activities of private institutions like multinational oil corporations, whose activities within the state territory have serious implication for the environment and also affect the citizens adversely (Atsegbua, 2001; Weiss, 1992). The reason for holding the state accountable for environmental degradation and pollution by private institutions like multinational oil companies, is due to the principle of state sovereignty; that is, each state have the decisive power to control what happens in its territory and should be able to design and enforce laws regulating its nationals and legal persons within its territory (Nollkaemper, 2006).

**Question 12: Do you think the environmental standard of oil companies has changed for the better or worse since democracy was installed in Nigeria?**

**CHART 12**



**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart illustrates that 59% of respondents think the environmental standard has become worse. The reasons 59% of respondents gave to back up their argument is that the oil companies do not care about the environment, they give money to community

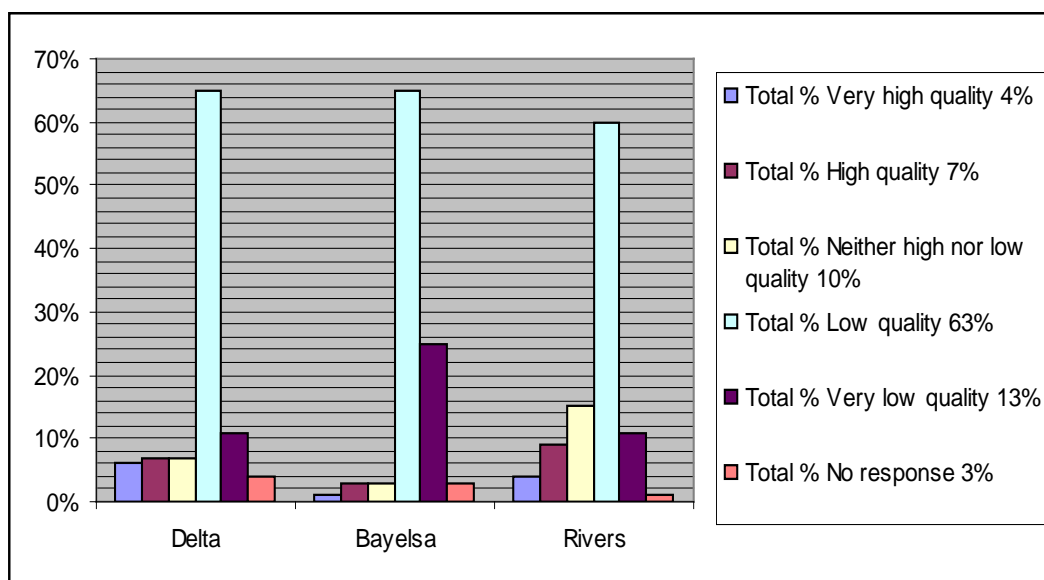


leaders instead of carrying out major projects in the community, the oil companies prefer to take host communities to court instead of clearing up their degradation in the community, the issue of gas flaring and oil spillage is still very much prevalent in the oil host communities, more cases of oil spill are reported without action from the oil companies and the oil companies pay lip service to the pollution without improving their standard of operation. It is particularly revealing that more individuals are of the opinion that the environmental standard by oil companies have become worse which has serious implications on how Nigerians view and accept the operations of oil companies. It is indeed plausible that most Nigerians are aware of the dangers associated with the operations of oil companies and this has led to stigmatization. It will be recalled from the literature review that Kasperon et al., (2003) defined stigmatization as the adverse public perception of an activity, technologies and institutions that are perceived to be excessively dangerous and thus leads to avoidance or pessimistic behaviours, which is already the issue the indigenes of oil host communities have against the oil multinationals operating in the Niger Delta region. Indigenes of oil host communities now view oil companies operations with suspicion; the elder statesman, in interview, note that the king of Okpe Kingdom, an oil host community in Delta State refused government plans to bring infrastructural development through oil companies to his community because they have been oppressed in time past by these oil multinationals to the extent that they cannot allow them into the community again (Interview, July, 2009). The print journalist who is also consulting for shell, in interview, acknowledged that the oil companies do not want to talk about degradation because a lot of damage has been done to the environment and to the people. Furthermore, the print journalist acknowledged that on one of the trips sponsored by SPDC to the creeks: 'I happen to know that a lot of damage has been done to the surroundings and to the creeks but sometimes because of company's corporate image, they try to hide some of the things they are doing' (Interview, July, 2009). The community leader, in interview, notes that the environment is in a poor condition and that the gas flaring and oil spillage is not properly managed because the oil companies are not taking measures to curb environmental pollution in his community (Interview, Community Leader, July, 2009).

The reasons 34% of respondents gave for thinking environmental standard had improved is that democracy has brought about change to oil host communities as oil companies now take them seriously, there are debates at the national legislative arm of government to curb unregulated activities of oil companies, the oil companies have always maintained a high standard but they neglect the people in terms of provision of basic amenities, the government now monitors and enforce environmental standard at Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and the oil companies now pay little attention to the environmental standard even though they can do more. This shows that democracy has brought about some little changes in the way oil companies operate, however, from respondents' point of view, these changes on the part of oil companies and government are very slow and its effects are not yet visible, which signals much attention still needs to be given not just to the operation of oil companies but also the welfare of the people. Overall, respondents are not satisfied with the environmental standard of oil companies.

**Question 13: How would you describe the quality of life in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 13**



**ANALYSIS:**

It is indeed revealing that respondents which describe life as low quality, very low quality and neither high nor low quality in oil host communities gave the same reasons to back up their argument. First, lack of basic amenities in oil host communities such as constant electricity supply, clean water supply, adequate means of transportation, hospitals, good roads and good housing scheme. Second, unemployment is on the high side as most indigenes cannot farm nor fish because of polluted land and water and also there are no graduate jobs. Third, the indigenes of oil host communities have nothing but poverty to show for the oil resources available in their community. The professor, in interview, acknowledged that life in oil producing community is very poor because:

‘if you go to the interior of the Niger Delta you will see people drinking water from the pit and some times from the river which in most cases people defecate in. More than eighty percent of youths in Bayelsa State don’t have jobs. Have you ever traveled on the Warri-Port Harcourt express road? You will see that the road is very bad. Life in the oil producing communities is very terrible particularly in the riverine communities, there are no roads and other basic amenities, government presence is very negligible and I will say that the government can do more’ (Interview, July, 2009).

Accordingly, the community leader, in interview, acknowledged that people in his community still lives in trash houses and that poverty level is at its peak in oil host communities, the community leader described the Niger Delta as a place the government and oil companies get their wealth and take to other places to develop and this is why there is agitation in the region because development is at it lowest level (Interview, July, 2009).

The low quality of life in oil host communities is alarming; thus, this raises the question of accountability on the part of government on the one hand because over the years

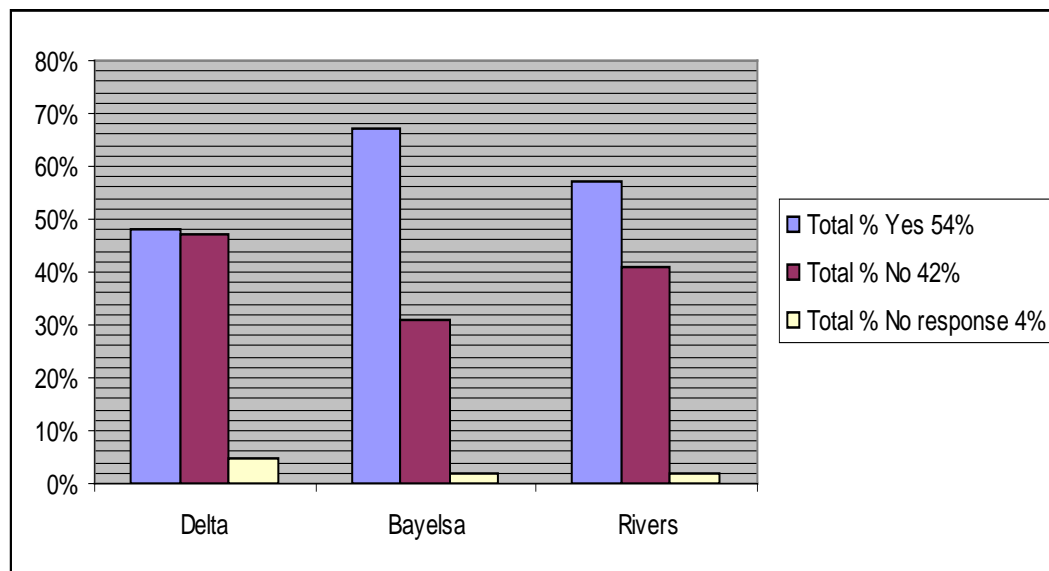
Nigeria derives over 95 percent of its major income from oil receipt and on the other, how oil companies compensate oil host communities for their loss due to environmental degradation which has impoverished the indigenes (Adedjoja, 2007). First, it will be recalled from the literature review that the federal government direction of policy from 1960-2008 has proved ineffective as the abysmal conditions in the Niger Delta have made most individuals dismayed and lead them to believe that the federal government has no solid, measurable policies for the region. Those who are of this view anchor their position on two reasons. First, there was no concrete attempt to address the appalling conditions in the Niger Delta, until the violent agitation started. Second, government intervention seems ineffective and appears bleak in view of the enormity of the conflict (Akpan, 2008). Second, The senior government official interviewed for this study notes that part of the environmental law states that where environmental degradation occurs due to third party intervention oil companies will not pay compensation but if the degradation is due to the negligence of the oil company, first they clean up, after which pay adequate compensation (Interview, Senior Government Official, July, 2009). The policy maker, in interview, notes that even when the environmental degradation is due to the negligence on the part of the oil companies, they normally divide the people by choosing some prominent people in the:

‘community and say alright you are our peace maker and how much are we going to give you and the amount usually runs into millions of naira. This is not compensation; it is settlement because the oil company is settling one person in order not to pay compensation to the whole community’ (Interview, Policy Maker, July, 2009).

In interview, the elder statesman notes that the implication of environmental degradation without compensation is absolute poverty because people eventually become jobless (Interview, July, 2009). The staff of ministry of environment notes that even when compensation is paid to the oil host communities, the standard is very low because it does not match the actual level of destruction (Interview, July, 2009).

**Question 14: Have you or anyone in your community suffered casualties as a result of government military operation with militants in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 14**



**ANALYSIS:**

It is indeed plausible that more than half of the respondents used for this study or someone in their community have suffered casualty as a result of government military operation in search of militants. It will be recalled from the literature review that government reaction to protest started in the early 1990s after the peaceful protest in Ogoniland in Rivers State which led to the death of late Kenule Saro-Wiwa and eight others (Afamafuna, 2008). However, communities like Odi, Umuechem, Iko, Bonny and others have suffered the same fate under government disguise in search of militants and they end up destroying the oil host communities (Akpan, 2008). In interview, the principal notes that:

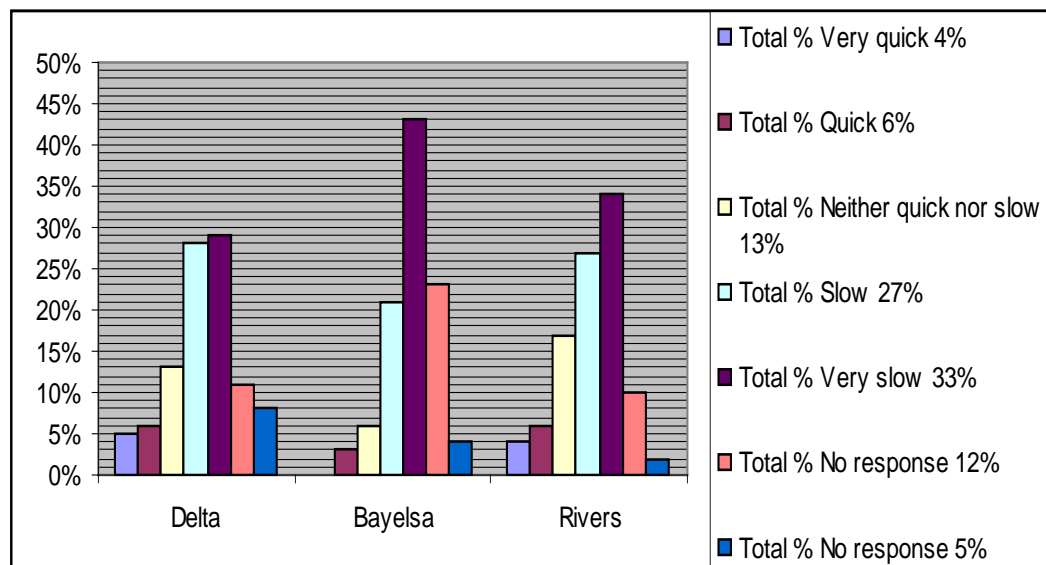
‘oil companies have been involved in what is classified as divide and rule system. What the oil companies do when people protest, they align with the federal forces, including the federal government, go there mount stands and

destroy these communities; where bribe and such things could not assuage the people they use this arrant force' (Interview, July, 2009).

When the president late Yar'Adua assumed office in 2007 he indicated that his key aim was to stabilise the crisis in the region. Unlike previous government that used force and military might, Yar'Adua went for peace, in the pursuit of his goal; he constituted a peace and reconciliation committee with the mandate to concentrate on conflict resolution in Niger Delta (Adedoja, 2007). According to the principal, in early 2009 government forces in search of a militant group in Delta State headed by Tom Polo, nearly twenty-seven communities were invaded and a good number of people were affected. The principal note that they raised this issue in a conference at Abuja in early May 2009, 'where the president came out with a statement to stop the offensive, but in June the same year the federal government was still destroying communities. Government forces attacked Abonima in June 2009' in pretence of removing militants (Interview, Principal, July, 2009). In interview, the professor criticized government military action as uncivilized because in a civilized world the government do not attack protesters and where militancy exist the government identify them and deal with them accordingly rather than descending on the entire community with military might (Interview, July, 2009).

**Question 15: How would you describe government response to the plight of indigenes in oil host communities in the Niger Delta in cases of environmental pollution?**

**CHART 15**



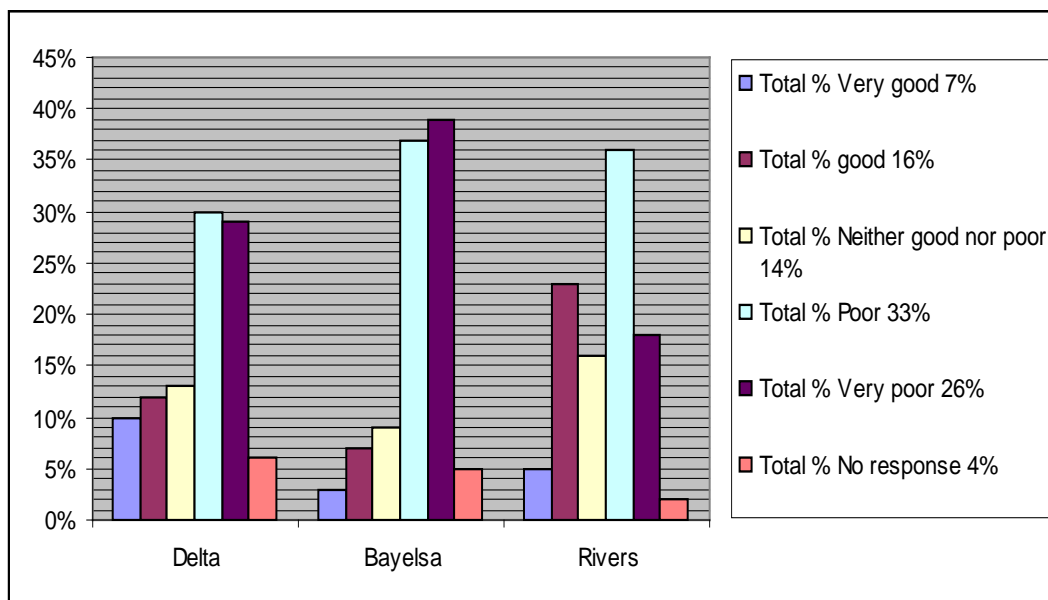
**ANALYSIS:**

It is indeed revealing from the above chart that government response is ineffective in attending to the plight of indigenes in oil host communities in cases of environmental pollution. The policy maker interviewed notes that it takes a longer time for government to attend to issues associated with compensation, providing palliative measures and attending to environmental degradation (Interview, July, 2009). The staff of ministry of environment acknowledged that there are so many environmental agencies carrying out the same function and it is who gets there first that does the job. Accordingly, it also depends on when report of environmental degradation gets to us as an environmental agency and whether the logistics are available, if the incident occurs in the creeks or swampy areas, we cannot get there because we do not have boats or helicopters so in most cases we rely on the proponents to take care of the logistics (Interview, July, 2009). The community leader, in interview, used his community as an example, in the event of

environmental degradation the community first cry out to the government and second to the oil companies, but it is the oil companies that take care of the devastation. The community leader notes that ‘even though the rescue may not be as fast as one will want but at least immediately any devastation is known they send their experts to where it is happening and they try to take measures to correct the abnormal situation’ (Interview, July, 2009). It will be recalled from the literature review that the Niger Delta crisis started as a result of neglect on the part of the government to attend to the activities of oil multinationals which usually pollute the environment (Akpan, 2008).

**Question 16: In general, how would you rate government performance to end the Niger Delta conflict through the provision of basic amenities in the region?**

**CHART 16**



**ANALYSIS:**

It is indeed revealing from the above chart that more than half of respondents rate government performance as poor and very poor, this shows that government policies to bring development into oil host communities is not working. It will be seen in chart 13, page 139 that the quality of life in oil host communities is low, which signals lack of



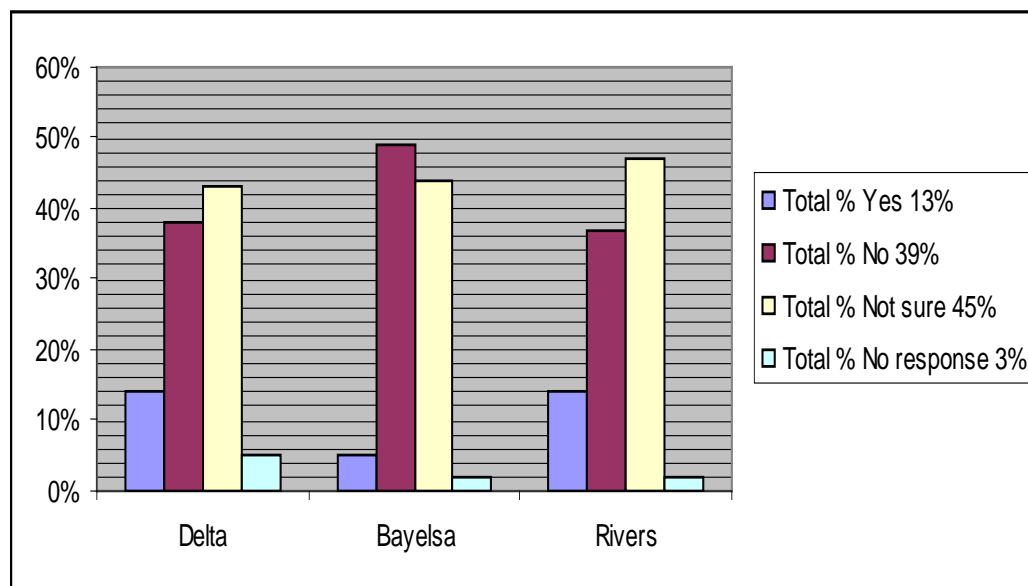
basic amenities and infrastructural development to meet the needs of the people. According to the community leader, government presence in his community is next to zero because of the political structure of the country. The community leader asserts that:

‘if you have a political big weight or political juggernauts in government from a community, then the community will have what they want from government in terms of infrastructure, social or welfare needs of the community but in a community like mine, where we don’t have such political big weights, the government presence have not gone beyond the schools, no roads and other basic amenities’ (Interview, July, 2009).

In interview, the professor notes that for oil host communities to feel government presence in terms of provision of basic amenities, the issue of corruption has to be tackled at all level of government [federal, state and local] (Interview, July, 2009). Accordingly, the principal acknowledge that previous governors from 1999-2007 have been accused of defrauding the people by not properly utilizing federal allocation in their states (Interview, July, 2009). It is indeed plausible that lack of implementation of government policies, Nigerian political structure and corruption have serious implication on government performance to bring development to the Niger Delta conflict.

**Question 17: Do you think the creation of Ministry of Niger Delta alongside the operation of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) will end the conflict in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 17**



**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart reveals that 45% of the respondents are not sure if the creation of Ministry of Niger Delta alongside NDDC will effect changes in the region and bring the Niger Delta conflict to an end. The reasons respondents gave to back their answers are that there is no sincerity in government implementation of policies towards the Niger Delta, the appointed officials to manage the NDDC are not conversant with the developmental problems in the region, creation of another ministry will not end the conflict because the ministry purpose will be defeated due to government interference, the NDDC has been there for long without meaningful development, the same top government officials who set up NDDC board set up the Ministry of Niger Delta and if not for the conflict in the region which turned into surge in militancy, government would not have thought of creating the new ministry. The reasons 39% of respondents gave are that previous commissions failed to discharge their developmental duties and the new

ministry will equally fail, the new ministry is just another government propaganda to deceive the Niger Delta people, the issue of corruption is still very much associated with government officials and the creation of a new ministry is already creating skepticism for government because there is still conflict to remove the ministry from Abuja to the Niger Delta. The reasons 13% gave for their answer is that Niger Delta has experienced some sort of development since government introduced these interventionist agencies and the new ministry will likely do the same.

The principal, in interview, notes that the NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta:

‘are just ways used by the new colonialist headed by the Hausa, Fulani’s, Igbos and the Yoruba [four major tribes in Nigeria] to still gimmick the oil producing minorities because the states here are small, the problems of the Niger Delta are enormous’ (Interview, July, 2009).

Furthermore, such interventionist agencies will not solve the problems in the Niger Delta because the problems are far too enormous for them to handle rather let the federal government practice true federalism where every state will control its resources and pay tax to the federal government (Interview, Principal, July, 2009). The elder statesman described every action of the federal government as ‘deceitful’ and ‘punitive’ because they have no interest in the people of the Niger Delta (Interview, July, 2009). The elder statesman note that not until he confronted and quarrel the federal government over the headquarters of the ministry of Niger Delta being at Abuja, consideration would not have been in motion to bring the ministry to the Niger Delta region. The elder statesman further stressed that Nigeria is a federation and should practice true federalism where the state pay tax to the federal government rather than unitary system. Accordingly:

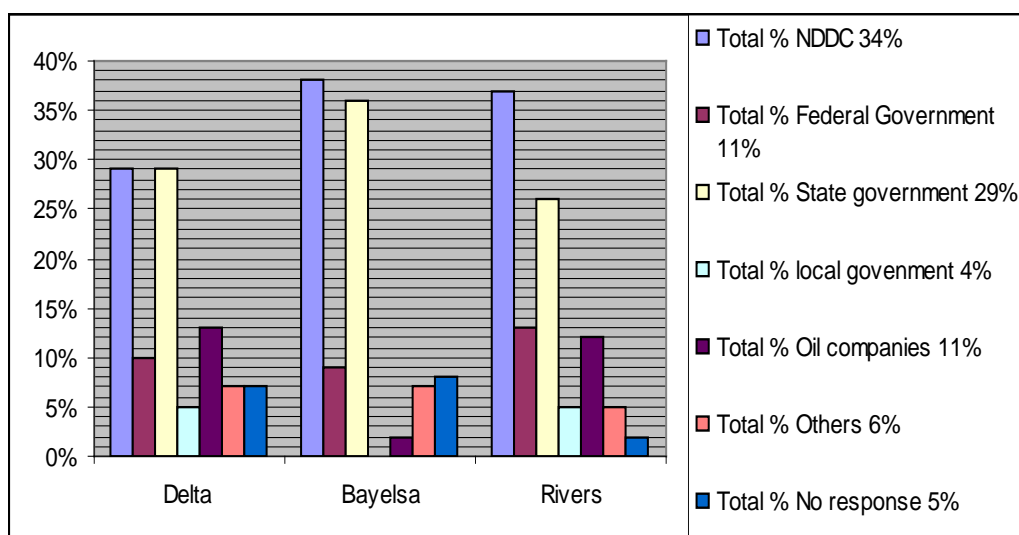
‘It is only tax they should take and not the bulk of the money coming in and then sharing it here and there. No matter what they do, I have told them at Warri in Delta State that the military might federal government put in the Niger Delta to suppress the militants will not work, unless they wipe out the

whole race, the people will emerge again, no matter the settlement or how far you suppress them, the people will come out until the government justifies them' (Interview, Elder Statesman, July, 2009).

From the above chart and respondents comments, it is evident that majority of Nigerians view government plans and policies to bring development to the Niger Delta through interventionist agencies with suspicion.

**Question 18: Who, in your opinion, engages more in developmental projects in the Niger Delta?**

**CHART 18**



**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart reveals that 34% of respondents are of the opinion that the NDDC engage more in developmental projects in the Niger Delta region. It will be recalled from the literature review that the former chairman of the governing board of NDDC noted that the commission does not receive the three percent of all monies from federal account as stated in the law but get arbitrary allocation from the nine states in Niger Delta for twelve months. This means the commission is not getting enough funds to execute projects and

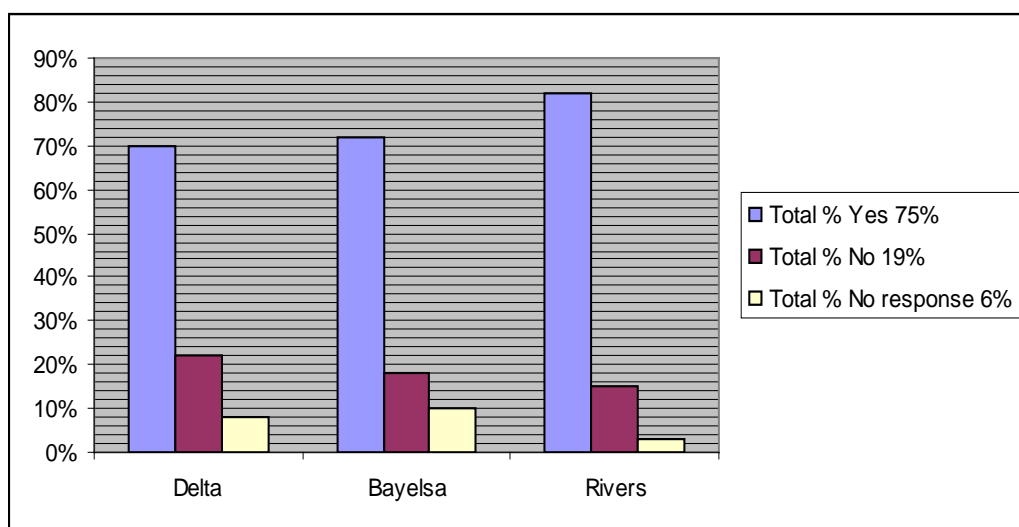
achieve the targeted developmental goal spelt out in the master plan. Despite the commission [NDDC] is under funded, its impact is felt much more in various communities in Niger Delta than local and state government which receive thirteen percent derivation fund from federal government (Ero, 2007; Mamah, 2008). It is worth noting here that despite the innovation and developmental project executed by NDDC, the anger of the oil host communities in Niger Delta have not been completely doused because they still view government plans with suspicion, see chart 17, page 147. However, it can be said that the commission seems to have reduced the tension a little in the region (Aham, 2007). In interview, the principal notes that 'it is true to say that the Niger Delta states were not doing well before these interventionist agencies like the NDDC and presently the Niger Delta ministry were set up' because the state and local government have been accused of embezzlement and defrauding the people's monthly federal allocation (Interview, July, 2009).

The state government is the second on the chart, though previous Niger Delta state governors were accused of defrauding the people. It is indeed revealing from record [see diagram in 2.5.6, page 73] that the state and local government are not effectively utilizing their funds because NDDC which appears to be under funded has become an alternative government to which all demands are directed. State and local government seem to be doing less as indigenes complain of their inaction and acknowledge the presence of NDDC in infrastructural development (Ero, 2007). According to the professor, in interview, the issue of management has been raised against the Niger Delta state governors on accounts of lack of government presence in most oil host communities in their states (Interview, July 2009). The oil companies and the federal government are third on the chart; first, while the Niger Delta state governors have not shown enough commitment in partnering with NDDC, oil multinationals have shown some enthusiasm in partnering the commission to achieve a common goal in reinstating peace and stability in the region. One of such partner projects was with Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and NDDC in the construction of the nine and a half billion naira [approximately forty-five million pounds] Ogbia-Nembe road, which is a 29.818 kilometre road comprising nine bridges (Ero, 2007). This shows that oil companies

engage in developmental project, although it does not appear to be much as only 11% of respondents acknowledge their developmental aspirations. Second, though the federal government established NDDC, however, they have been accused of not meeting the agreed funds meant for the commission. The principal, elder statesman and professor, in interview, argue that the federal government outreach to the Niger Delta through interventionist agencies will not bring adequate and meaningful development to the Niger Delta because the challenges are too enormous for them to handle unless they practice true fiscal federalism (Interview, July, 2009). It is very clear that NDDC tops the chart in meeting community development in the Niger Delta region despite it is under funded than federal government, state government, local government and oil companies.

**Question 19: Considering the wide spread of gas flaring in the Niger Delta, do you think it is contributing to global warming?**

**CHART 19**



**ANALYSIS:**

It is indeed plausible from the above chart that more than half of the respondents are aware of global warming which has serious implication on mans existence on earth. It will be recalled from the literature review that gas flaring is another aspect of risk issue

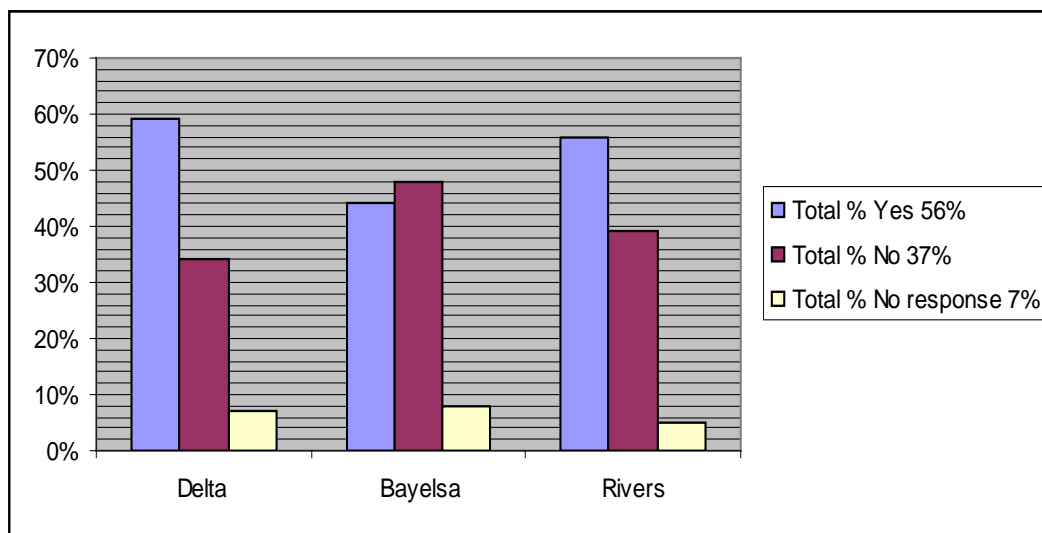
associated with environmental pollution brought about by the activities of multinational oil corporations. It will be recalled from the literature review that flaring natural gas from oil stations as a by-product of crude oil production has become a normal occurrence that dominates the skyline in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Oil production began in Niger Delta about fifty years ago and so did the practice of ceaseless flaring of Associated Gas (AG) twenty-four hours a day. More Greenhouse gas (GHG) is flared in Nigeria's Niger Delta region than anywhere else in the world and this placed Nigeria as the biggest gas flarer in the world. Currently, there are more than hundred gas flaring stations in Nigeria (Afamefuna, 2008; Idris, 2007; Ishisone, 2004; Friends of the Earth, 2004). The last democratic President, Olusegun Obansajo (1999-2007) signed a non-binding agreement with multinational oil companies to end gas flaring in the Niger Delta region by 2008 (Friends of the Earth, 2004; Climate Justice Programme, 2005). However, at present there is no end in sight. According to the policy maker, in interview, the federal government has not put pertinent laws in place to end the issue of gas flaring in Nigeria. In 2009 senate passed a law to end gas flaring without an implementation format. The gas law bill has not been accepted by the president, 'it was just passed by the senate, the House of Representatives have not even passed it so it goes beyond what the host communities can do on their own because oil exploration as it were is of the exclusive risk in the constitution' (Interview, July, 2009).

It will be recalled from the literature review that within the conceptual framework of Foucauldian perspective, risk and safety are seen as fundamental facet of authority and domination and however a plan for the government of societies (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). Risk from this perspective may be understood as governmental scheme of regulatory power by which citizens are under surveillance and managed through the aspirations of neo-liberalism (Lupton, 1999). The aim of governmentality is not to confront a strong dangerous situation, but to foresee all possible forms of irruption of risk, this preventative measure that constitutes the social policy are now mainly used not only by citizens or individuals needing assistance by the state, but by permutation of factors which constitutes risk assessment that concentrate on the summative population and not the individual. Such state or government activities are carried out on supposed

possibility of consulting risk science as a basis for reducing harm to citizens of the state. ‘The control of these probabilities, and protection of individuals from risk, becomes the responsibility of inter-locking agencies with varying levels of direct connection with the state’ (Denney, 2005: 35). The Foucauldian perspective on governmentality position on risk is far from ideal and not working in the Nigeria’s Niger Delta context because there is a twist in government policies to end the prevalent gas flaring as the issues is still dragging in government domain without a lasting solution.

**Question 20: Are you aware of any time when indigenes of oil producing communities in Niger Delta ignored warnings of the risk involved in disrupting oil pipelines from authorities that led to casualties or deaths?**

**CHART 20**



**ANALYSIS:**

The above chart illustrates that 56% of respondents are aware of casualties and deaths as a result of indigenes of oil host communities disrupting oil pipelines prior to warnings from authorities. The instances sighted by 56% of respondents are Idjerhe Jesse oil fire incident in Delta State 1998, where almost a thousand people lost their lives, another pipeline explosion in 2000 near the town of Jesse in Delta state killed about two hundred



people, Ilado fire incident near Lagos State in 2006, over three hundred people died and Okrika in Rivers State, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) jetty fire in 2007 which claimed forty lives. It will be seen from the different incidents date that individuals are still ignoring warnings despite the severe consequences of previous risk events that led to casualty and deaths. It will be recalled from the literature review that the social amplification of risk framework (SARF) starts from the concept of a risk-related occurrence (Petts et al, 2001). These events pertaining to risks interact with a wide range of psychological, social, institutional and cultural processes which create interpretations that may heighten or attenuate risk perception and its manageability, thereby shaping risk behaviour (Murdock et al, 2003; Renn et al, 1992 in Breakwell et al, 2001).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS / RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter seek to answer the research questions the researcher formulated as a response to a number of intriguing observations of the conflict in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The research questions rely on known information and reasoning from library materials used for this study such as books, journal articles, newspapers publication and credible internet materials which helped to formulate the literature review for this study; second, research method such as the qualitative [interview] and quantitative [questionnaire] analysis the researcher generated which helped to inform the results' presentation / data analysis. It is worth noting here that the five research questions connect the two methods [quantitative and qualitative] used for this study. That is, the quantitative questions were extracted from the literature review, specifically focusing on the key areas of the research questions – Niger Delta conflict, environmental risk issues, media, policy, trust and stakeholders [oil companies, government / policy makers and oil host communities]. The qualitative questions were designed from the quantitative questions with a specific focus on the research questions in order to probe beyond the structured questions in the questionnaires to get a fuller picture / knowledge of the issues in the study and to confirm the findings of both approaches. The findings generated for this study are discussed and analysed using the research questions as a focus.

**Research Question 1: To what extent can media exposure influence policy maker's perception about public opinion on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict?**

It will be recalled from the literature review that agenda setting in relation to policy can be classified into three subfields: media agenda setting, the public's agenda setting and policy agenda setting (Rushefsky and Patel, 1998; Porche, 2004). The plethora of research articles on agenda setting has conceptualized either media agenda setting, public agenda setting, or policy agenda setting as the dependent variable (Rushefsky and Patel, 1998; Rogers and Dearing, 1988) in order to elucidate how it is influenced by other

factors (Whitney, 1991). Agenda setting scholarly articles demonstrates that the agenda setting process links the activities of public and media agendas in policy development (Berger, 2001, also see Rogers and Dearing, 1988). Thus, for media agenda setting to occur, issues must be given a significant amount of media coverage, which indicates the extent to which the media agenda has been set, and by extension, policy agenda-setting is marked by the emergence and importance of the issues or events in the public policy field (Rogers and Dearing, 1988 cited in Whitney, 1991). Although this is not a traditional agenda-setting study in that it does not track media content and its corresponding influence on publics or policy-makers, it is interested in exploring protagonists' perceptions of the media's agenda-setting role, and the dynamics behind this. Taking onboard the concept of media agenda setting, the researcher must first consider the level at which the Nigerian media investigates and disseminate issues linking public opinion and activities in the society in order to influence policy makers' perception about public opinion. This, of course, directs this study to look at the underpinning factors that may impede adequate media coverage and investigation of public opinion on issues in Niger Delta in order to elucidate the extent to which the media can influence policy.

First, one vital area the media can use to influence policy is to create an atmosphere where public opinion on issues in the Niger Delta are discussed with policy makers. The concept of the public sphere is vital to an understanding of how issues are directed and to what extent the mass media can help individuals learn about their environment, create an independent forum for public debate, thereby enabling the formation of public opinion to keep the state in check and also help citizens to reach informed political choices on issues of societal and personal interest (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991). It is particularly revealing from Chart 8, chapter four, page 129 that the public perceive that the media rarely / very rarely gives indigenes of oil host communities the opportunity to partake in a public debate with policy makers on issues relating to the Niger Delta. Journalists also perceive this to be the case: The broadcast journalist, in interview, made it clear that the media seldom organises such opportunity, perhaps twice a year and it is only when there is crisis (Interview, broadcast journalist, July, 2009). This shows that the public sphere is far from ideal; the implication of this action on public opinion is that policy makers will not have

the opportunity to know the mind of the public concerning the scale of risk issues affecting their livelihood and environment. Arguably, on this occasion, the media have reduced citizens to passive audience observers rather than active. This is because representatives such as political groups, academic experts, professionals, pressure groups, journalists and a centralised electronic media in Nigeria, now dominates and influence the flow of information and public opinion (Butsch, 2007).

Second, the data suggests that the frequency of media coverage and reportage on issues in the Niger Delta region determines the extent to which the public believe the media can influence policy makers' perception about public opinion. It is indeed plausible that the indigenes of oil host communities in the Niger Delta have over the years campaigned against risk issues affecting their environment and economic activities as a result of environmental degradation by the activities of oil companies (Ransome-Kuti, 2007: 3). However, the violent agitation in the Niger Delta started as a result of government insensitivity to the plight of the oil host communities (Adedoja, 2007; Africa Action, 1999). At this stage, it will be worth investigating the aspect of the conflict the Nigerian media seem to be covering the most. It will be recalled from the literature review that Ogunbunmi a journalist interviewed on media performance with regards to Niger-Delta crisis admitted that although the media are reporting the crisis, it is also imperative they draw attention via in-depth and interpretative reporting to the underlying cause [risk issue] of the crisis (Jimoh, 2008). It is particularly revealing in Chart 3, chapter four, page 117 that the public perceive that the media has not covered risk issues and its consequences on economic activities and the environment enough to attract government attention. The professor, in interview, made it clear that media reportage on risk issues in the Niger Delta is weakened because there are no experts or indicators of environmental quality to monitor / record and disseminate the precise implications of environmental degradation to plants, animals and humans in the region through the media. Thus, media reporting is limited to only the physical events of the degradation, which does not match the actual consequences of the pollution. However, it is worth saying here that the Nigerian government has an environmental watch dog, which is the federal ministry of environment but in essence, the facilities the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR)

have are substandard to the facilities that are in possession of the oil companies. As a result, the DPR rely on the information received from the oil companies in terms of environmental pollution 'so how are you sure the information is correct and not tampered with' (Interview, Professor, July, 2009).

Third, access to the affected areas where environmental degradation and violent agitation occurs cannot be easily reached by journalists. On the one hand, in the event of environmental degradation, journalists find it difficult to get to the location because they are under equipped, lack the logistics and technical knowhow. In rare cases these oil companies aid only journalists that consult for them but with a caution for them not to mention what they see. According to the print Journalist, in interview:

'the oil companies don't want you to mention anything about degradation but if you go to the oil producing areas you will know that a lot of damage has been done to the people that reside there. I happen to know much because I consult for Shell, I am one of those that if Shell is doing anything, they call on me to deliver one lecture or the other, they take me round and I see a lot even this creek they are talking about, it was Shell that took me on tour because I was delivering papers on the activities of the militants as it affects Shell. I said I will not talk whatever that I have not seen so they sponsored the trip to the creeks, the first time I can now tell you that I know what can be called creeks. I happen to know that a lot of damage has been done to the surroundings and to the creeks but sometimes because of company's corporate image; they try to hide some of the things they are doing' (Interview, Print Journalist, July, 2009).

However, the print journalist asserts that funding to visit these affected locations is problematic because most media organisations have limited funds due to the enormous financial challenges in the setting up of facilities in media establishment (Interview, July, 2009). Also there are restrictions placed by the government to certain affected region

where the public express their opinion perhaps through peaceful or violent agitation. The NTA journalist, in interview, notes that:

‘in a crisis situation journalists cannot all move to that place for security reasons, security in the sense that when you are going into a war zone there are people that will make it possible for you to come there and be able to report, you don’t just go at your own will, you are free to go there but can you get to the place?’ (Interview, NTA Journalist, July, 2009).

Thus, this has serious implication on journalists’ reportage because where journalists cannot get access to the affected region to get public opinion on ongoing events, their report will not be balanced and this may affect policy. The print journalist, in interview, gave an example of some journalists who wrote an article about an incident that happened in Gbaramatu community in Delta State about military action against violent protest without visiting the community. However, the report turned out to be over exaggerated and it did raise both public and government concern. The exaggerated report is as follow:

‘the report that came to us was that the place was completely destroyed and there were no humans, animals or buildings remaining until the governor got there and found out that the reports were twisted. It was an alarm raised that the community was invaded, but when it was shown on television you could see humans, domestic animals and buildings apart from those they bombed’ (Interview, Print Journalist, July, 2009).

Fourth, press freedom in Nigeria is another factor that can impede media coverage on issues in the Niger Delta. It will be seen from Chart 9 and 10 in chapter four, page 131 and 133 that the press is perceived by Nigerians to be fairly free and has become better since democracy was installed. However, the print journalist argue that the press still faces handicaps and that is why reports on public protest over environmental degradation is on the low side because the freedom of information bill has not been passed into law,

hence journalists are not allowed access to information. The print journalist notes that the government is not willing to sign the information bill because in Nigeria:

‘those in authority see journalists as enemies and most times when the government wants to set up committees to look into the conflict, they keep journalists away so they will not know what is happening in the affected communities, because they believe that if journalists are there they will be forced to write what is happening. They have forgotten too that a journalist is an added advantage to help them know the problem of the area and if journalists exposes the problems of these areas, the problem is half solved but they are keeping many things out and it is what we know that we use’ (Interview, Print Journalist, July, 2009).

In interview, the professor acknowledged that information control on the part of oil companies is problematic because the freedom of information bill has not been passed. Accordingly, the oil companies are not ready to give accurate information about their operations and this has however, affected in-depth media coverage on risk issues in the Niger Delta (Interview, July, 2009). Aside from the problematic nature of the information bill, the journalist from NTA notes that it is not easy for journalists to challenge the government and policy makers on risk issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict because there is no total press freedom. When journalists:

‘voice out, some persons in some quarters will try to suppress what you are saying because they have the will power to do that. A typical example, is when you see some journalists been incarcerated because they gave reports on certain issues that some persons are involved who have personal interest in such areas, they don’t want such report to be public knowledge so they try to suppress it. There are other ways to suppress it, some journalists have become gullible therefore they succumb to the idea and things like that, so you find out that they work out their reports as the case may be’ (Interview, NTA Journalist, July, 2009).

Against this backdrop, the researcher concludes that the extent to which the Nigerian media can influence policy makers' perception about public opinion on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict is far from ideal. It is true to say that the Nigerian media are handicapped to a very large extent in information gathering due to the complex nature of the Nigerian government and conflict in the Niger Delta. Although, the media have covered and reported the crisis, they have not done so to a large extent because the factors that impede media performance as discussed above seem to be having a very clear effect in terms of media coverage as journalists are limited to certain aspect of the agitation / conflict due to information control. This might itself be interpreted as problematic because media reports are not in-depth enough to effect change in the policy field.

However, this perception is not universal. For instance, the NTA journalist argues that:

'the media has done a lot, if not for the media government attention would not have been drawn to the issues in the Niger Delta, the people have been agitating for long, a lot of commission have been set up but have not been doing anything about the issues but with this current move by the media through writing, telecasting and other means of reaching out to the people; government saw the need to act because the situation in the Niger Delta was getting out of hand' (Interview, NTA Journalist, July 2007).

The principal, in interview, argue that the Nigerian government is interested in creating interventionist agency like NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta without looking into the root [risk issues] of why the Niger Delta people started protest in the first instance (Interview, July, 2009). It will be recalled from the literature review that the abysmal conditions in the Niger Delta have made most individuals dismayed and lead them to believe that government has no solid, measurable policies for the region. Those who are of this view anchor their position on two reasons. First, there was no concrete attempt to address the appalling conditions in the Niger Delta, until the violent agitation started. Second, government intervention seems ineffective and appears bleak in view of the enormity of the conflict which has defeated every tried solution (Akpan, 2008). This



shows that the government and policy makers did not effectively respond / act to the peaceful agitation over neglect, underdevelopment, violation of political and civil rights and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region in response to the activities of oil multinationals over the years despite media coverage. It is indeed very clear that it was not until the agitation became violent and started affecting Nigeria's oil receipts due to closures of oil wells by indigenes of oil host communities in most part of the Niger Delta region that the government / policy makers decided to take action by introducing some palliative measures / policies to calm down nerves in the region.

To this end, this study reveals that the media agenda setting theory did not work on this occasion because the theory failed to consider the determinant factors that impede information gathering which affect media performance and coverage on the one hand, and on the other, the media did not play any significant role in influencing government agencies / policy choices. This is because journalists have no input into policy-makers' decision making process. According to the print journalist:

'when the government wants to set up committees to look into the conflict, they keep journalists away so they will not know what is happening in the affected communities, because they believe that if journalists are there they will be forced to write what is happening. They have forgotten too that a journalist is an added advantage to help them know the problem of the area and if journalists expose the problems of these areas, the problem is half solved but they are keeping many things out and it is what we know that we use' (Interview, July, 2009).

This shows that the government / policy makers have their own agenda different from what the media has been depicting concerning public opinion on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict. Against this, the NTA journalist contends that if not for the media, government attention would not have been drawn to the issues in the Niger Delta (Interview, July 2009). However, it is very clear from this study that government response in terms of policy formulation in attending to the Niger Delta conflict does not

always align with media depiction on issues in the Niger Delta because the harsh terrain of the Niger Delta region remains substantially unaddressed. It is indeed plausible that the media agenda setting theory does not work in real life crisis / conflict scenario because the theory was based on hypothetical findings rather than real life events.

**Research Question 2: Can media exposure shape the Nigerian public's perception on policy issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict?**

It will be recalled from the literature review that the literature on public agenda setting indicates that the media construct public agenda through media exposure, by influencing what is news and who and what is newsworthy (Dye 2002 cited in Porche, 2004). The mass media channel their attention to issues that will inform the public on what they should know, think and have feelings about. This hypothesized function of the media does not tell its audience or readers what to think but what to think about (Folarin, 1998 in Nwanne, 2006; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Rogers and Dearing, 1988). 'While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it is hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issue' (McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 177). Although this is not a traditional agenda-setting study searching for correlations between media content and public opinion, to answer the research question above, the researcher has considered both the Nigerian public's perception about Nigerian media and how the Nigerian public view policy implementation by policy makers. This enables a more nuanced understanding than that provided by traditional agenda-setting research of the media's role in shaping the Nigerian public's perception on policy issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict.

In order to understand the level of influence media exposure has on the Nigerian public's perception on policy issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict, it is worth looking at from where the Nigerian public mostly get their information on the Niger Delta conflict; second, how satisfied are they with media coverage on issues in the Niger Delta; third, what is the trust relationship between the media and the Nigerian public? First, it will be

seen from Chart 1, chapter four, page 113 that more than half of the respondents get their information from the electronic and print media; this shows that media coverage and reportage remains essential to the Nigeria public when seeking information on the Niger Delta conflict. It is particularly revealing in Chart 7, chapter four, page 127 that the media shapes most audience awareness about risk issues in the Niger Delta region. Accordingly, the media remain essential to the political process. They are the engine room where battles over defining, identification, conflict and risk management are fought out and brought to public knowledge in the Nigeria's Niger Delta context (Bourdieu, 1998). Second, Chart 2, chapter four, page 115 reveal that most respondents are fairly satisfied with reportage / coverage. Thus the media shapes their awareness on risk issues and is also their preferred means of getting information on the Niger Delta conflict. Third, it will be seen from Chart 4, chapter four, page 119 that most Nigerians trust the media to tell the truth on risk issues in the Niger Delta region more than any other agency linked directly or indirectly to the conflict [although pressure groups come a very close second]. Against this backdrop, Nigerians perceive media depiction on risk issues in Niger Delta as truthful; hence they consult the media to shape their awareness on issues in the Niger Delta region indicating that they are fairly satisfied with media coverage. Thus, it can be said that the Nigerian media has the capacity to influence the Nigerian public on the risk issue.

To understand the Nigerian public's perception of policy issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict, it will be worth exploring how the Nigerian public views policy implementation in order to know the type of relationship that exists between policy makers and the Nigerian public. First, to get a clearer view of policy issues in the Niger Delta, it will be worth reviewing how effective previous policy implementations have been in the Niger Delta. It will recalled from the literature review that the direction of policy in the Niger Delta started as early as 1957 when the Niger Delta people and other ethnic minorities protested against the then regional and central government in the allocation of basic amenities. In 1961 the first ministry, Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) was created to meet the developmental needs of the region (Nwabuawe, 2008; Bassey 2006 in Akpan, 2008; Niger Delta Crisis, 2000). As seen in the literature review,

from 1961 onwards different government regimes, both military and civilian established different policies that created commissions to see the developmental needs of the Niger Deltans but this aim was never achieved. In the wake of democracy in 1999 the then president Obasanjo went the old way to establish another commission known as Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC); however, the commission failed to meet the summary of the commission's directive which was to change the face of the Niger Delta through sustainable development because it was under funded by the federal government (Ero, 2007; Mamah, 2008). In 2007, the late democratic president Yar'Adua assumed office and continued with the vision of NDDC. In view of expanding this project he decided to create a new commission in 2008 known as Ministry of Niger Delta to work alongside NDDC because of the unabated agitation in the Niger Delta region (Reuters, 2008). However, the move by the late president prompted debate between critics alike, an activist and human right lawyer noting that the Niger Delta ministry is more bureaucracy that will avoid the real issues in the region (Walker, 2008; Daily Trust, 2008). According to Akpan, previous years of government policies in the Niger Delta was perceived as 'half-hearted and mischievous in intent and negative in manifestation leaning towards incremental and or disjointed implementation theory of policy making' (2008: 307). The failure of previous commission in the Niger Delta has made people to believe that the government has no solid, measurable policies for the region (Akpan, 2008). It will be seen from Chart 17, chapter four, page 147 that 45 percent of respondents are not sure if the creation of Ministry of Niger Delta alongside the operation of NDDC will end the conflict in the Niger Delta and 39 percent of respondents acknowledged that the creation of Ministry of Niger Delta will not end the conflict. In interview, the elder statesman notes that:

'the federal government created what they called the Niger Delta ministry; they say it is a fact, but it is a deceit and where did they put the head quarters, at Abuja. I said why did they put the ministry in Niger Delta and put a liaison officer at Abuja' (Interview, Elder Statesman, July, 2009).

Furthermore, every action of the federal government is disciplinary, nothing to the interest of the people (Interview, Elder Statesman, July, 2009). The principal, in interview, acknowledge that the NDDC and currently the Niger Delta ministry will not help the problems of the Niger Delta because they are enormous and that it is another way of the government to hoax the people of the Niger Delta. According to the principal, these:

‘interventionist agencies are not going to solve the problems of the oil producing communities rather, at best, they can aggravate because they will just be a small chunk in a deep sea because the problems are more than what these interventionist agency can handle. What we need here is resource control and true federalism, rather than these communities having small chunks but instead these communities will pay royalty to the federal government and the prospecting communities will pay tax as it is done in the United States of America’ (Interview, July, 2009).

It is indeed plausible that direction of policy from 1961 to 2009 has not brought meaningful development to the Niger Delta. This shows that government policy to bring development to the Niger Delta through commissions is far from ideal; Chart 16, chapter four, page 145 revealed that 33 percent of respondents’ rate government performance to end the Niger Delta conflict through the provision of basic amenities as poor and 26 percent of respondents rated government performance as very poor. It will be seen from Chart 13, chapter four, page 139 that 63 percent of respondents described the quality of life in oil producing communities in Niger Delta as low quality and 13 percent of respondents described the quality of life as very low. The community leader interviewed for this study notes:

‘that there is nothing to write home about when it comes to the standard of life and development in the oil producing communities. These are people who still live in trash houses; in fact poverty level is at its peak in these areas, it is just a place they get the wealth and take to other places to

develop and that is the theme and pain of the oil communities because development here is at its lowest level. In fact there is no development let me say so, would you say that there is development? When people cannot eat two square meals a day, when the road to these oil producing communities are usually flooded and cars cannot move on the roads, lack of industries and of course no electricity, the electricity in these areas can hardly function, lets say two hours a day. In fact there is nothing in the Niger Delta especially in the oil producing communities' (Interview, July, 2009).

It will be recalled from the literature review that the insensitivity of the government to the plight of the Niger Delta people over the abysmal condition in the Niger Delta region led to peaceful protest in the first instance before it then metamorphosed into surge in militancy, oil pipeline vandalism and hostage taking of oil workers for ransom (Adedoja, 2007; Africa Action, 1999). It is indeed plausible that the Nigerian government response appears bleak to the plight of Niger Deltans. It will be seen from Chart 15, chapter four, page 144 that 33 percent of respondents note that government response to the plight of the people in oil host communities in the Niger Delta in cases of environmental pollution which brings economic embarrassment to the community is very slow and 27 percent rated government response as slow. This raises the issue of blame and trust for government on policy implementation on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict. First, it will be seen in Chart 5, chapter four, page 121 that 64 percent of respondents blame / hold government responsible for the crisis in the Niger Delta region than any other institution linked directly or indirectly to the crisis. The reason respondents gave was that government failed to discharge their social responsibility effectively in the Niger Delta region by not providing the indigenes of oil host communities with basic infrastructural needs. Second, the issue of trust is raised here for government on risk issues in the Niger Delta region; it will be seen in Chart four, chapter four, page 119 that trust for government and politicians is in short supply and this has serious implications for policy acceptance by the masses as they view government plans with suspicion. Accordingly, the masses are key players in risk controversies and distrust

may lead to rejection of policy decision (Pidgeon et al, 2003). Thus, abstract systems depend upon trust; hence active trust must be won and maintained (Giddens, 1990). It is indeed very clear from this study that the abysmal condition in the Niger Delta region has led Nigerians to believe that the government has no meaningful plans for the Niger Delta region hence they blame / hold government responsible for the crisis. Arguably, this has made people living in the Niger Delta lose trust for government policies through another interventionist agency as previous ones did not work. This shows that the relationship between the government and the Nigerian publics is far from ideal as every move by the government towards policy implementation in the Niger Delta region is viewed with suspicion and doubts.

Against this backdrop, the researcher concludes that it will be very difficult, if not impossible to positively influence the Nigerian public's perception on policy issues relating to the Niger Delta region despite evidence that the Nigerian media can influence the Nigerian public on this risk issue. This is because the Niger Delta people are still faced / confronted with the abysmal condition in the region regardless of various policies through interventionist agencies in the past. Thus, this has made indigenes in the Niger Delta have doubts and believe that the introduction of another policy through interventionist agency by the current government will equally fail like the previous ones. It is indeed plausible that the relationship between the Nigerian public and government is not working due to lack of trust for government / politicians; hence Nigerians hold the government responsible for the crisis in the Niger Delta region. At this stage, media dissemination concerning policy issues in the Niger Delta will not be accepted because distrust for government / politicians already exists and this has, however, led to doubts and suspicion of another policy through commission by the Niger Delta people. It will be worth saying here that the media is only an avenue through which policy makers disseminate information; thus, the media can only draw the public attention to policy issues and does not tell its audience what to think but what to think about (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Rogers and Dearing, 1988). This shows that the mass media have very little influence on the nature of audience perception or intensity of attitudes about policy issues

(McCombs and Shaw, 1972) because of Nigerian policy-makers' past performance and the role of direct experience of risk issues in the Niger Delta region.

**Research Question 3: How effectively have the Nigerian media communicated risk issues on contemporary environmental degradation in the oil affected communities of the Niger Delta?**

It will be recalled from the literature review that Beck acknowledges that we now live in an era characterized by uncertainty which he termed risk society. This is an era obsessed with risk of ecological and natural disaster, accidents, technological errors, professional miscalculation and scientific uncertainty. Modern uncertainty has triggered public and political debate over defining risk as a concept (1995b: 21-6; see also Eldridge and Reilly, 2003) and the mass media are seen to play a key role in social transformation and channel through which risk-related events are mediated (Lundgren and McMakin, 2004). There is a prevalent belief amongst sectors of risk community, industry, experts and government agencies that the media exert significant influence on people's responses to risk. Sociological approaches suggest that the media facilitates the awareness of public risk consciousness (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). Taking on board the concept of media and risk on the one hand, and on the other, to get an ideal answer to this research question, it will be worth looking at how the Nigerian media have conveyed this risk information to the public.

First, it will be recalled from Chart 11 in chapter four, page 134 that 30 percent of respondents [which was the highest in the chart] rated the operational standard by oil companies as low and 29 percent rated the standard as very low. This shows that the Niger Delta people have a sense of the operational activity of oil companies, perhaps as it affects their environment. However, it is also revealing that the standard of operation by oil companies has deteriorated. Chart 12 in chapter four, page 137 shows that 59 percent of respondents admitted that since democracy was installed in Nigeria the operational standard of oil companies has become worse. It is indeed plausible that the environmental standard by oil companies is very far from ideal and does not meet the safety standard



stated by the Stockholm conference 1972, which states that mankind has a fundamental right to freedom, right to dignity that permits adequate conditions of life in an environment of quality, right to equality and well being. Awareness about such conditions to life in the oil host communities has increased concerning these oil multinationals operations in the Niger Delta. It will be seen from Chart 6 in chapter four, page 125 that 59 percent of respondents perceive the risk of environmental degradation to humans, plants and animals as very high risk and 30 percent perceived the risk as high risk. Also, Chart 19 in chapter four, page 151 illustrated that 75 percent of respondents acknowledged that gas flaring is contributing to global warming. This shows that the indigenes of oil host communities are faced with unprecedented scale of environmental degradation. It will be recalled from the literature review that the Nigerian ministry of environment recorded four hundred and nineteen cases of oil spills within the first six months of 2008 (Ochayi and Okereke, 2008; Lawal et al, 2008). The principal, in interview, acknowledges that:

‘the up stream and down stream activities of these multinational giants have polluted the waters so the eco system is polluted and the environment is also polluted. However, the oil host communities livelihood has been affected because the mangrove swamp which is saline breeds crabs, lobsters and so on. With these environmental hazards, the people of the oil producing communities who lives on these sea animals no longer catch enough for sale because the environment is polluted and the sea animals can not survive in such harsh terrain so their economy is affected, source of drinking water is affected’ (Interview, July, 2009).

The professor, in interview, acknowledged that gas flared in flow stations in different communities in the Niger Delta contribute to:

‘green house emission which is very high but we are unable to know precisely the level of carbon emission in the Niger Delta. Then water quality, if you go to many of the communities where you have oil, if you

dig just twelve feet you will get water, and you will see that the water is mixed with crude oil and this is where people look for water to drink; then crops, crops don't grow well in these areas any longer and when people talk about it, its just like making a point and nothing to say. If you go to the Isoko areas in Delta State you will see that the vegetation is coated with black carbon. If you are driving from Isoko to Warri and to other parts of Ijaw communities [all mentioned locations are within Niger Delta] you will see that crops and fruits have carbon deposits and they don't grow well any longer; acid rain is a reality in the Niger Delta' (Interview, July, 2009).

Second, having looked at the outcome of environmental degradation and how the indigenes of oil host communities perceive these risks, it will be worth looking at how the media have disseminated these risk issues to the public policy field. It will be seen from Chart 7 in chapter four, page 127 that 48 percent of respondents note that the media shape their awareness about risks of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. However, this shows that more than half of the respondents prefer to get their information from other sources as shown in the chart rather than the media, so perhaps they are not too satisfied. Chart 2 in chapter four, page 115 shows respondents' satisfaction on media coverage of the Niger Delta conflict; although, 40 percent which is the highest are fairly satisfied. It will be seen that the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction spreads across the chart. Chart 3 in chapter four, page 117 reveals the aspect of the conflict the media might be neglecting, perhaps that is why more than half of the respondents get information from other sources; hence their decision about media varies greatly within satisfaction and dissatisfaction as seen in Charts 7 and 2. It is indeed revealing from Chart 3 that 45 percent of respondents note that the media have not brought the risks of environmental degradation to government attention and 20 percent of respondents are not aware if the media have actually conveyed risk issues to the government. This shows that media coverage / reportage is low on risk issues in the Niger Delta. It will be recalled from the literature review that the Nigerian media has in one way or the other played significant role in reporting the Niger-Delta conflict; however, research carried out by Ekeanyanwu (2005) revealed that sixty percent of news reporting in Nigeria on crisis

management concentrate on personality and lack in-depth analysis (Tobechukwu and Oluwaseun, 2008). The underpinning factor here is that the media try to set agenda for policy makers through media reporting by drawing attention to the violent agitation thereby ignoring the risk issues associated with environmental degradation in the Niger-Delta region (Okanume, 2008). It will be recalled from the literature review that a journalist interviewed on media performance with regards to the Niger-Delta crisis acknowledge that the media are reporting the crisis, however, it is also imperative they draw attention via in-depth and interpretative reporting to the underlying causes [risk issues] of the crisis (Jimoh, 2008). In most circumstances, especially reporting risk issues [like oil spillage or oil pipe explosion] in the Niger-Delta, a journalist's commitment to 'truth' and 'balance' may not at all parallel actual risk occurrences because most media correspondents are not always on hand to cover risk occurrences the way they unfold (Ashong and Udoudo, 2008; also see, Kurfi, 2008). Studies like Hughes et al, (2006) and Kitzinger (1999) note that risk reporting guided by journalistic institutional traditions and norms have little matching to actual threat directions. Risk reporting clustering around major risk occurrences, 'ignoring multi-causal, long-term or hypothetical risks and influenced by commitments to 'balance' and 'truth', both concepts liable to founder against the value-laden rocks of uncertainty when reporting risk' (Bakir, 2008: 2: also see, Perez-Lugo in Campbell 2008). The professor, in interview, notes that the Nigerian:

'media can only report when they have indicators of environmental quality that have been well monitored and recorded but we don't have such agency to monitor and report these issues. The only thing the media report is the physical characteristics of the degradation. What you see cannot match the actual consequences of the pollution' (Interview, July, 2009).

The print journalist, in interview, notes that to a very large extent there is handicap in reporting risk issues associated with environmental degradation:

'and the handicap is that people are not ready to give you the facts especially the government sector and that is why reportage of

environmental degradation is on the low side; either they don't know or they deliberately withhold the information and without such information, how far can you go? Journalists work like the police, without a tip you can't do anything and that is one of the reasons why the Nigerian press have been pushing for the freedom of information bill to make a law for any government official to willingly give you any information you ask for' (Interview, July, 2009).

Accordingly, the professor, in interview, notes that information control is a determinate factor that hinders journalists from getting accurate information from oil companies because 'there is an agreement the oil companies have about their operations which government may not have, if they give all the information they have about destroying the environment, government will sue them' (Interview, July 2009). The print journalist, in interview, note that he consults for Shell hence he 'knows that a lot of damage has been done to the surroundings and to the creeks but sometimes because of company's corporate image; they try to hide some of the things they are doing' (Interview, July, 2009). In addition, the NTA journalist, in interview, acknowledges that it is not easy to confront the government with the risk of environmental degradation because there is no total press freedom, when journalists speak about the risk issues in the Niger Delta region some people in high places will try to suppress what they are saying because they have the authority to do so:

'They don't want such report to be public knowledge so they try to suppress it; there are other ways to suppress it, some journalists have become gullible therefore they succumb to the idea and things like that, so you find out that they work out their reports as the case may be' (Interview, NTA Journalist, July, 2009).

Against this backdrop, it is very clear that the Nigerian media are reporting the daily agitation in the Niger Delta region; however, little or no attention is given to the risk associated with environmental degradation. It is plausible that several factors are

responsible for low risk reportage and coverage in the region as discussed above. First, there is no total press freedom; there is information control on the part of the government and oil companies hindering free flow of information on environmental standards (Interview, Print journalist, July, 2009; Professor, July, 2009) and the government suppresses reports on risk issues in the region (Interview, NTA journalist, July, 2009). Second, there are no indicators of environmental quality to monitor and report the long term effects of the risks associated with environmental degradation through the media (Interview, Professor, July 2009). Third, journalists are not always on hand to cover risk events the way they unfold in the Niger Delta region (Ashong and Udouo, 2008). This is because the mass media are unevenly attracted to risk; thus, the mainstream news media are poorly constructed to sustain attention of any specific future threat (Eldridge and Reilly, 2003). When a risk is still hypothetical and there are no proven casualties to interview, a story will be less attractive to news media (Hughes et al, 2006).

It is true to say that media coverage and reportage on risk issues in the Niger Delta is on the low side, which indicates that the indigenes of oil host communities perceive risk from first hand experience as they are confronted with the hazard on a daily basis [see diagrams in 2.5.1 in Chapter two, page 57-8]. The indigenes are also aware that the risks in the Niger Delta region has increased as the operations of oil companies have become worse since the installation of democracy in 1999 [See Chart 12 in chapter four, page 137]. However, the knowledge of indigenes of oil host communities are limited to the physical risk of environmental degradation without having a proper understanding to ascertain the long term dangers / effects of these risks because they are not adequately informed by the media or experts. This shows that the media are under performing in the dissemination of risk – particularly given that studies of media and risk assert that the mass media are seen to play a key role in social transformation and channel through which risk-related events are mediated (Lundgren and McMakin, 2004). ‘It can be argued that journalists should expand their narrative horizons to include not just facts about the risk in question but also how people feel about the risk and why’ (Palfreman, 2006: 38). Although risk reportage in the Niger Delta is on the low side, however, when journalists report about environmental degradation, they should report both the physical

characteristics of the events and the psychological subtext on how the public think about such risk issues.

To this end, the researcher concludes that the Nigerian media have not effectively communicated risk issues on environmental degradation. It will be seen from the foregoing that media coverage / reportage of risk appears to be very low and limited only to the physical characteristics of the risk event. However, media reportage lacks long term effects of environmental degradation and psychological implication on public perception about such risk issues in the Niger Delta.

**Research Question 4: What are the issues of trust between the Nigerian government, oil companies and the oil affected communities?**

In order to understand the theme of trust, the researcher will have to look at how the oil multinationals and Nigerian government operate with the indigenes in the oil affected communities in the Niger Delta region. It will be seen from Chart 4 in chapter four, page 119 that trust in government is 17 percent and politicians 4 percent, showing that trust is in short supply. Trust for oil companies is 3 percent which is the lowest in the chart; this shows that trust for oil companies is almost non-existent. Having seen the levels of trust for government / politicians and oil companies by indigenes of oil host communities, it will be worth looking at the determinant factors that are responsible for the short supply of trust in these agencies.

First, the conflict in the Niger Delta started due to the operational standard of oil companies which the indigenes view as low / very low standard [see Chart 11 in chapter four, page 134] and also to be of a very high risk [see Chart 6 in chapter four, page 125]. It will be recalled from the literature review that risk issues associated with the operations of oil multinationals starts from the search for crude oil by seismic crew of the oil servicing companies (OSC's) and during exploration / exploitation activities (Oji, 2008; Afamefuna, 2008; Omoweh, 1995; 1998). However, the implication of environmental degradation due to the activities by these multinationals in the Niger-Delta has left most

oil host communities impoverished due to oil leaks amounting to thousands of oil spilled into the environment, deep sea disposal of poisonous substances and air pollution by constant gas flaring into the atmosphere have left land, air and water unbearable for the inhabitants to cope with (Idris, 2007: Ransome-Kuti, 2007). At this stage, issues of trust are raised; first, over how these oil companies handle environmental degradation / pollution; second, obey the rules of compensation and third, their ambitions in the region.

First, the ways in which oil companies handle pollution in the Niger Delta region determines the level of trust and conflict between the oil host communities and oil multinationals. It will be recalled from the literature review that cases of oil spill are not handled as a matter of urgency in the Niger Delta, for instance in July 2007 two communities [Osusu and Joukrama] in Rivers State complained of oil spills from SPDC but did not get the attention of the company until February 2008 (Breakfast Show, AIT, Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2008 cited in Ashong and Udoudo, 2008). In interview, the broadcast journalist notes that in situations where oil companies delay or fail to attend to environmental pollution the affected communities cry out to the media in form of press release or conference before the:

‘oil companies will kind of do a press release to also tell the world but it may be too late because by then, they must have carried a different side of the story which have to do with the community before the oil companies will go to the affected community and do a routine task by covering up the exact location where the degradation occurred’ (Interview, Print Journalist, July, 2009).

It will be worth saying here that in this type of circumstances, trust becomes a factor as both the affected community and oil companies have different reports about the pollution. The community leader, in interview, notes that in cases of oil spill due to technical error, the oil companies do not respond quickly to correct the abnormal situation (Interview, July 2009). Issues like this led the King of Okpe kingdom in Delta State to refuse government proposals to bring oil companies into his community because according to

the king, the oil companies have oppressed them to the extent that it is impossible to allow them operate in his community (Interview, Elder Statesman, July, 2009). Issues of trust and credibility are constantly raised in oil host communities because there has been much anxiety about technological errors which has amplified lay people's concerns and responses to risk messages and their unwillingness to accept proposals for activities perceived as risky; mobilized social and political protests to avert risks; led to lay questioning of the competence and credibility of the decisions of authorities and risk regulators – all issues raised by previous research into the media and risk (Kasperson et al, 1992; Petts, 1992; 1995; 1998; Flynn et al, 1993; Lofstedt and Horlick-Jones, 1999 cited in Petts et al, 2001).

Second, it will be recalled from the literature review that oil multinationals, in particular SPDC, claim losses worth four hundred and nine million naira [approximately two million pounds] daily to sabotage and illegal activities of oil bunkers in the Niger Delta (Ebiri, 2008). However, Omoweh contends that technical / human error, poor maintenance, sand cut and ruptured oil pipelines accounts for seventy percent of oil spillage in Niger-Delta and thirty percent are linked to sabotage (1998). Given the spate of crisis between oil multinationals and host communities on oil spill, the National Oil Spill Compensation Rate (NOSCR) was created to act as a guide for oil industry operators in arriving at a reasonable and accepted compensation to host communities whenever the need arises (Lawal et al, 2008). Over the years, the issue of compensation has been problematic and at times triggered crisis in the oil affected region. In interview, the policy maker notes that the indigenes of oil host communities are not actually compensated:

‘if there is an oil spillage in the community, the first thing that is suppose to be done, is to curtail the spillage and when that is not done the communities will rise up either to block the passage or to cause crisis in the area and if there is any crisis, the oil companies will report to government and before you know, these people are arrested, members of the host community are arrested. When they are arrested, it leads to another problem, so instead of



paying compensation to them, what the oil companies normally do is to divide them by picking one person, a prominent man in the community and say alright you are our peace maker and how much are we going to give you and the amount usually runs into millions of naira. This is not compensation; it is settlement because the oil company is settling one person in other not to pay compensation to the whole community' (Interview, July, 2009).

Accordingly, the elder statesman, in interview, argues that the indigenes are not adequately compensated and that the oil companies in order to avoid compensation make some strategic people to become their contractors (Interview, July, 2009). This process is what the principal, in interview, referred to as divide and rule system used by oil companies to create problems in oil host communities (Interview, July, 2009). The community leader notes that the direction of conflict in his community is between indigenes and community leaders and the community versus the oil companies because of the practice of the divide and rule system used by these oil multinationals. At this level of communal conflict between these parties the issue of transparency in their dealings with the oil host communities is raised. Accordingly, the executives from oil multinationals conspire with community leaders in order not to pay the required compensation. However, transparency is:

'zero on the part of the oil company's representatives and their liaison officers and the leaders of the community, there is no transparency. If they are given money to develop the community, they embezzle the money, the development will not be there and it has been so all along. There are fake contracts given to the leaders that are never carried out but they are paid so that is the situation in my community' (Interview with Community Leader, July, 2009).

The elder statesman, in interview, notes that the practices of these multinationals is problematic because at the end when nothing is done to remedy the situation on ground, it

leads to protest in the community and the oil companies will refer them to the leaders and this will tarnish the image of community representatives and bring division among the people (Interview, Elder Statesman, July, 2009). It will be seen from Chart 5 in chapter four, page 121 that community leaders is fourth on the chart to be held responsible for the Niger Delta conflict. The staff of ministry of environment, in interview, acknowledges that in terms of whether the indigenes of oil host communities are compensated he would say:

‘yes and no, in the sense that if the degradation is caused by third party no compensation is paid. Third party, like vandals, criminality action; the oil companies will not pay compensation but if it is equipment failure, technical failures then they do something. It is the level of payment the oil host communities are talking about, the standard is very low. In most cases the level of compensation does not match the actual level of destruction’ (Interview, July, 2009).

It will be recalled from the literature review that in Beck’s industrial phase risks are scientifically justifiable, industrially manufactured and companies do not pay for their pollution. Thus, in industrial societies there is an increasing sense of distrust for traditional authorities and social institutions (Lupton, 1999). It is indeed plausible that Beck’s notion of the industrial phase also applies to the Niger Delta situation. The indicators are risk associated with environmental degradation caused by oil companies [see Chart 19 in chapter four, page 151], distrust for oil companies / government and politicians [see Chart 4 in chapter four, page 119] and oil companies do not adequately pay for their pollution [see above quote].

Third, the way degradation is handled and compensation is paid by oil companies have made most people question their ambition in the Niger Delta region. The elder statesman, in interview, argues that the oil companies are:

‘only here to take away oil, they don’t care about the damages they are causing to oil producing communities. If you go to different areas of these oil host communities, you will see gas flaring, oil spillage and toxins being buried. The most recent [2009] is in Ndokwa local government area in Delta State even at Ozoro here in Delta State they buried toxins, the report is there, the oil companies are trying to hide it but they can’t because lawyers have gone into the case, scientist have also gone to the location and confirm that they buried toxin, so they are not looking for anything other than to take away the oil and leave the people with nothing. They are not doing anything to bring good and conducive environment to the people rather they are always polluting the environment and that is one of the reasons why people will continue to act’ (Interview, July, 2009).

It will be recalled from the literature review that the minister of state for energy and gas in 2008 noted that if oil companies had executed the necessary route to end gas flaring five years ago, the issue would have ended by now but instead, oil multinationals preferred to pay the fine imposed as penalty for continuous flaring of natural gas rather than to put an end to it (Aliu, 2008). The community leader, in interview, notes that the oil company’s ambition is to make money to the detriment of the oil host communities and when they find out that any community they are operating in is not as hostile like other oil communities they pay little or no attention to the developmental aspirations of the community (Interview, July, 2009). It will be recalled from the literature review that oil companies have a bad reputation of handling indigenous cultures and local people in their search for oil (Langford et al, 1999). Accordingly, societies are becoming more critical of the activities of organised irresponsibility of the industrial era that is systematically accompanied by that of risk, individuals starts to lose trust trying to measure what is rational and safe (Beck, 1996b).

Second; the government and indigenes of oil host communities have a history of conflict which has indeed affected trust for government / politicians. First, government expenditure from oil sales raises questions of accountability by oil host communities

because the amount of money government realise from oil sale [see 2.5.6 in chapter two, page 73] is more than enough to change the face of the Niger Delta. The abysmal condition in the Niger Delta region have made indigenes in the Niger Delta confront the federal government over resource control because the introduction of interventionist agencies over the years have not brought meaningful development to the region [see Chart 13 in Chapter four, page 139]. This has made most individuals dismayed and lead them to believe that government has no solid, measurable policies for the region (Akpan, 2008). In interview, the principal notes that the introduction of another interventionist agency will not solve the:

‘problems of the oil producing communities rather, at best, they can aggravate because they will just be a small chunk in a deep sea because the problems are more than what these interventionist agencies can handle. What we need here is resource control and true federalism, rather than these communities having small chunks but instead these communities will pay royalty to the federal government and the prospecting communities will pay tax as it is done in the United States of America’ (Interview, July, 2009).

It will be seen from Chart 17 in chapter four, page 147 that 45 percent of respondents are not sure if the introduction of another interventionist agency [Ministry of Niger Delta] will work and 39 percent of respondents think that it will not work. This shows distrust for government policy to correct the abnormal condition in the Niger Delta; hence, there is campaign for resource control by Niger Deltans [see, Chart 4 in chapter four, page 119]. Previous policies through failed commissions over the years to remedy the situation in the Niger Delta have led to distrust and rejection of policy by the masses.

At the state level, the federal government have accused the Niger Delta state governors of not developing their states with the monthly allocation they receive. It was also clear that previous Niger Delta governors (1999-2007) were accused of embezzlement and defrauding the Niger Delta people’s monthly revenue allocation to the state meant to

meet the developmental needs in the region (Interview, Principal, July 2009). The professor, in interview, notes that the Niger Delta state governors:

‘are totally untrue people than the federal government and when some of them started talking of getting more from the oil resources in terms of propagating the adoption of true fiscal federalism by which they learnt that they will get more out of the oil revenue coming from the oil producing states. Then the former president Obasanjo raised the issue of management, it is on record that the Niger Delta state governors have actually got so much given to them from the federation account, to what extent have they applied it’ (Interview, July, 2009). For state allocation, see 2.5.6, page 73

At the local government level in the Niger Delta region, the principal notes that the local government are ineffective in their roles despite the huge amount that they receive. This is because, they share among themselves the people’s monthly allocation meant for development at the local level (Interview, July, 2009). In interview, the professor notes that there is nothing to write home about on local government performance because if you consider their effort to meet the developmental needs of the Niger Delta people, the government will not score high marks because they have not actually addressed the issues in the Niger Delta region (Interview, July, 2009).

In interview, the elder statesman accuses the government of being untruthful to the people in terms of revenue allocation and infrastructural development in the oil host communities. Accordingly, the government should come out and declare the actual amount they have spent on projects in the Niger Delta and then it will be known to the public they have done nothing (Interview, July, 2009). The principal, in interview, made known that federal projects that runs into billions of Naira are taken to non oil producing states in Nigeria for infrastructural development (Interview, July, 2009). The community leader asserts that Nigeria is:

‘political, if you have a political big weight or political juggernauts in government from a community, then the community will have what they want from government in terms of infrastructure, social or welfare needs of the community but in a community like mine, where we don’t have such political big weights, the government presence have not gone beyond the schools, no roads and other basic amenities, government effort in the area is next to zero’ (Interview, July, 2009).

In interview, the elder statesman notes that government deceit goes beyond the money they get from oil revenue. He asserts that the government is not been truthful and when the Isoko oil well in Delta State was closed down, within a week the government said the community have lost one hundred and twenty-eight billion Naira. It is when government run into losses through conflicts or closure of oil wells they declare how much they have lost, but when they gain from oil sale, they will never disclose the amount to the public; ‘who are they deceiving? They are deceiving themselves, their trouble will continue until they change’ (Interview, Elder Statesman, July, 2009).

Another issue of distrust for government is that government support oil companies each time conflict arises between the indigenes of oil host communities and oil multinationals over environmental degradation. The policy maker, in interview, gave an instance of an oil spill at Abalagada in Ndokwa east, Delta State in 2003, noting that it was almost impossible to bring the oil company involved [Agip] to Delta State House of Assembly [legislative arm of government] for investigation. This is because the oil companies are aware that Nigeria depends on oil and if they threaten to leave the federal government will ask them to stay even when we have all these laws put together. However, the federal government action has reduced the state legislative arm of government to mediator between the oil host communities and oil companies. Furthermore, policy making concerning environmental laws in Nigeria has been very slow and a stepping stone will be to abolish the land use decree act of 1978 which states that all land belongs to the federal government and start introducing new laws that are amendable and are in reality to the situation in the Niger Delta region. Accordingly:

‘when land belongs to the owners of the community, everybody will see themselves as stake holders but as it were today, government owns the land, the community suffers from oil exploration, compensations are not paid, agricultural crops are not growing and economic activities are on stand still’ (Interview, Policy maker, July, 2009).

These are the issues that led the indigenes to protest and when this happens the government will mount military officials in the region and other oil producing communities to suppress the people. Government military might will not work unless they address the situation in the Niger Delta region (Interview, Elder Statesman, July, 2009). The principal, in interview, notes that:

‘it is worth bearing in mind that along side Shell, Chevron, Agip, Mobil and others; these oil companies have been involved in what is classified as divide and rule system. What the oil companies do when people protest, they align with the federal forces, including the federal government, go there mount stands and destroy these communities. Where bribe and such things could not assuage the people they use this arrant force’ (Interview, July, 2009).

Against this backdrop, it will be seen why trust for government / politicians and oil companies are in short supply [see Chart 4 in Chapter four, page 119] and the reason why the oil affected communities also hold these agencies responsible for the crisis in the Niger Delta region [see Chart 5 in chapter four, page 121]. It is indeed very clear that the oil affected communities do not trust the operations of government and oil companies in their communities. It is particularly revealing that there are contentions over revenue allocation and corruption among the three tiers of government which also has affected trust over further increase of monthly allocation to states and local government by the federal government. However, the federal government dominates other arms of government at state and local government level to favour the course of operations by oil companies in the Niger Delta region. This shows that the federal government of Nigeria

and oil companies seem to have semblances of trust for each other in their dealings with the oil host communities. It is also clear that trust for community representatives by their indigenes is far from ideal due to the divide and rule system the oil companies employ to divide the people. It is indeed plausible that distrust for community leaders, government and oil companies led to the agitation in the Niger Delta, and its purveyors – oil multinationals and the government – are beneficiaries. The victims are, of course, the indigenes of oil host communities (Niger Delta Crisis, 2000).

**Research Question 5: Are there any strengths or weaknesses of media exposure in influencing the Nigerian government’s policy relating to the Niger Delta conflict?**

This study so far has shown more weaknesses with little or no strengths on media performance relating to the Niger Delta conflict. It is plausible that the media are weak in certain areas that might affect the Nigerian government’s policy on issues relating to the Niger Delta. First, it will be seen from Chart 10 in chapter four, page 133 that the public perceive the media to have become better since democracy was installed; and, Chart 9 in chapter four, page 131 reveals that the public perceive the press to be fairly free. In response to this, the print journalist and professor, in interview, notes that the major area where the press is handicapped is the lack of access to information. Furthermore, until the information bill is passed into law, journalists cannot report effectively on the Niger Delta enough to influence government policy because both the government and oil companies withhold vital information hence risk reportage on environmental degradation is on the low side (Interview, July, 2009). According to the print journalist, on the one hand, there are laws reflecting Nigeria’s status quo such as ‘secret act’, ‘vote of six’ and others which hinders the government from passing the information bill and on the other, government view journalists with great suspicion and regard them as enemies and when they set up committees to look into the Niger Delta conflict, journalist are kept away. The print journalist contends that where there is no freedom of information there is no press freedom (Interview, July, 2009). The NTA journalist, in interview, acknowledges that the government has a vested interest in the Niger Delta because of the oil revenue they generate from the region hence they are always on guard and any hard news from the



Niger Delta region they try to suppress either by force or buying out journalists to work out their reports in order to keep such information out of public knowledge (Interview, July, 2009).

Second, another area where media presence seem rather weak is offering the indigenes of oil host communities the opportunity to partake in public debate with government officials / policy makers on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict. Chart 8 in chapter four, page 129 indicated that 37 percent of respondents acknowledged that the media rarely create such public sphere and 30 percent of respondents went for very rarely. This shows that the public sphere is far from ideal. According to the broadcast journalist, the media organise workshops twice a year and it is only when there is trouble they embark on emergency approach of trying to resuscitate the public sphere in order to sensitize the people (Interview, July, 2009). This type of approach by the media does not help shape policy because policy makers are more likely to have an excuse to ignore the issues until there is problem. Third, factor that impedes media coverage is access to the crisis-affected areas in the Niger Delta region. On most occasions journalists find it very difficult to visit the areas where events like government military operation have occurred in their search for militants or protesters (Interview, broadcast journalist, July, 2009). Accordingly, the broadcast journalist, in interview, notes that because of inaccessibility to the affected location, 'more often than not, media report is based on what they hear, receive as text messages, information they get through emails by these militants or individuals from affected communities in Niger Delta'. However, these claims and information are not verifiable and often lead to occasions where journalists mislead the public on incidents in the Niger Delta (Interview, July, 2009). Thus, inaccurate information on the Niger Delta conflict has serious implication in influencing government policy. On the other, financial constraints, lack of logistics and adequate equipment make it difficult for journalists to visit these areas where there is degradation (Interview, print journalist, July, 2009).

Fourth, Nigeria's media structure comprises of private and government media ownership, which affects the degree of press freedom that exists at a given time (Uche, 1989 in

Agbese, 2006). The twist in Nigerian media is that private media outfits have become ineffective in carrying out their responsibility in a democratic society due to commercial interest leaving the independent press open to personal monopoly for owner's benefit. The principal, in interview, notes that that the national newspapers owned by private individuals from other tribes outside Niger Delta region have not been covering the conflict properly because they think the conflict is significant to the progress of the Niger Delta people (Interview, July 2009). Government owned media are mere loud speakers and propaganda machines for the government in power (Agbese, 2006; Olusola, 2008). According to the NTA journalist, in interview:

'we are all just machines, we try to justify a lot of things, I don't know, opinion differs, yours could be different from mine as a journalist. This media agency is every government organ and we have to follow a phase, we try to do the two, even when we are reporting the truth as it were, we try to cushion the effect one way or the other' (Interview, July, 2009).

The broadcast journalist, in interview, asserts that:

'given the kind of society we are in Nigeria, access to information is always very difficult because government wants to cover up and even the oil companies wants to cover up, so more often than not, government media outfit tend to succumb to government side, it is only the private media outfit like guardian, vanguard and others that tend to report a little bit above average in the sense that their reporting may not be too balanced because of this lack of access to information' (Interview, July, 2009).

The journalists from the print and broadcast media, in interview, made known that in every media outfit proprietor matters a lot especially when dealing with the Niger Delta conflict as it is deemed sensitive (Interview, July, 2009).

Despite the weakness associated with the media which is enormous due to the nature of the conflict and the kind of complex society in Nigeria, the media still try to cover the events as much as possible but try not to aggravate or incite the tension in the region (Interview, NTA journalist, 2009). This has, however, made Nigerians trust the media more than the government [see Chart 4, chapter four, page 119] even though media report may be incomplete and not too balanced. The strength for media here is that what the media depicts about the protest may go a long way to affect some changes. The broadcast journalist acknowledges that:

‘the media have done well because they have been able to attract the attention of the world to the plight of those in the Niger Delta and the media have also been able to make government to bend backwards to do some of those things they couldn’t have done over the years, like the setting up of the Niger Delta Ministry, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), a lot of intervention agencies to enhance the welfare of those in the Niger Delta, if not for the media these things would not have come to pass. I believe that with time and with more access, funding and openness on both side, on the side of the militants and government, media will excel’ (Interview, July, 2009).

To this end, it is very clear that the media have more weaknesses than strength; however, media strength is still weakened because what the media report is usually not too balanced due to the weakness experienced by journalists with regards to the Niger Delta conflict and if media coverage affects changes or policy implementation at all, then, of course, the implication of such policy will not at all meet the actual needs in the Niger Delta because the policy will only cover the aspect the media depicts and ignore other areas that media find it very difficult to access. In essence, policy implementation will have blind spots and will not effect the changes in the Niger Delta. The principal, in interview, acknowledges that the areas depicted by the media, is the focus of some policies; however, he contends that there should be a factor where the government is finally going to look into the origin of the conflict and why the violent agitation came up

in the first instance, and unfortunately, these issues have not been looked into (Interview, July, 2009). It will be worth saying here that until all aspects of the conflict are adequately covered by the media without distortion or interference of any kind, the media will not be able to shape government policies in the right direction to solve the problems in the Niger Delta region. Hence, previous policies through the creation of commissions failed to meet the developmental needs and aspirations of the Niger Delta people partly because journalists lacked adequate information on issues in the Niger Delta region.

## 5.1 SUMMARY OF KEY / INTERESTING FINDINGS

**Research Question 1:** To what extent can media exposure influence policy maker's perception about public opinion on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict?

The extent to which the Nigerian media can influence policy makers' perception about public opinion on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict is problematic. It is true to say that the Nigerian media are handicapped to a very large extent in information gathering due to the complex nature of the Nigerian government and conflict in the Niger Delta. Although, the media have covered and reported the crisis, they have not done so to a large extent because the factors that impede media performance seem to be having a very clear effect in terms of media coverage as journalists are limited to certain aspect of the agitation / conflict due to information control. This might itself be interpreted as problematic because media reports are not in-depth enough to effect change in the policy domain. It is indeed very clear that it was not until the agitation became violent and started affecting Nigeria's oil receipts due to closures of oil wells by indigenes of oil host communities in most part of the Niger Delta region that the government / policy makers decided to take action by introducing some palliative measures / policies to calm down nerves in the region. However, government response in terms of policy formulation in attending to the Niger Delta conflict does not always align with media depiction on issues in the Niger Delta because the harsh terrain of the Niger Delta region remains substantially unaddressed. This shows that the government / policy makers have their own agenda different from what the media has been depicting concerning public opinion on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict. It was particularly revealing that the media agenda setting theory did not work on this occasion because the theory failed to consider the determinant factors that impede information gathering which affect media performance and coverage on the one hand, and on the other, the media did not play any significant role in influencing government agencies / policy choices. It is indeed plausible that the media agenda setting theory does not work in real life crisis / conflict scenario because the theory was based on hypothetical findings rather than real life events.

**Research Question 2:** Can media exposure shape the Nigerian public's perception on policy issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict?

The researcher concludes that it will be very difficult, if not impossible to positively influence the Nigerian public's perception on policy issues relating to the Niger Delta region despite evidence that the Nigerian media can influence the Nigerian public on this risk issue. This is because the Niger Delta people are still faced / confronted with the abysmal condition in the region regardless of various policies through interventionist agencies in the past. Thus, this has led indigenes in the Niger Delta to have doubts and believe that the introduction of another policy through interventionist agency by the current government will equally fail like the previous ones. It is indeed plausible that the relationship between the Nigerian public and government is not working due to lack of trust in government / politicians; hence Nigerians hold the government responsible for the crisis in the Niger Delta region. At this stage, media dissemination concerning policy issues in the Niger Delta will not be accepted because distrust for government / politicians already exist and this has, however, led to doubts and suspicion of another policy through commission by the Niger Delta people. It will be worth saying here that the media is only an avenue through which policy makers disseminate information; thus, the media can only draw the public attention to policy issues and does not tell its audience what to think but what to think about (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Rogers and Dearing, 1988). This shows that the mass media have very little influence on the nature of audience perception or intensity of attitudes about policy issues (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) because of Nigerian policy-makers' past performance and the role of direct experience of risk issues in the Niger Delta region.

**Research Question 3:** How effectively have the Nigerian media communicated risk issues on contemporary environmental degradation in the affected oil communities of the Niger Delta?

Risk reportage in the Niger Delta region is problematic due to information control on the part of the government and oil companies, there is no total press freedom, journalists are

not always on hand to cover risk events the way they unfold and there are no indicators of environmental quality to monitor and record the long term effects of the risks associated with environmental degradation through the media (Interview, professor, July, 2009). It is true to say that media coverage and reportage on risk issues in the Niger Delta is on the low side, which indicates that the indigenes of oil host communities perceive risk from first hand experience as they are confronted with the hazard on a daily basis [see diagrams in 2.5.1 in Chapter two, page 57-8]. The indigenes are also aware that the risks in the Niger Delta region has increased as the operations of oil companies have become worse since the installation of democracy in 1999 [see Chart 12 in chapter four, page 137]. However, the knowledge of indigenes of oil host communities are limited to the physical risk of environmental degradation without having a proper understanding to ascertain the long term dangers / effects of these risks because they are not adequately informed by the media or experts. This shows that the media are under performing in the dissemination of risk because the concept of media and risk assert that the mass media are seen to play a key role in social transformation and channel through which risk-related events are mediated (Lundgren and McMakin, 2004). 'It can be argued that journalists should expand their narrative horizons to include not just facts about the risk in question but also how people feel about the risk and why' (Palfreman, 2006: 38). Although risk reportage in the Niger Delta is on the low side, however, when journalists report about environmental degradation, they should report both the physical characteristics of the events and the psychological subtext on how the public think about such risk issues.

To this end, the researcher concludes that the Nigerian media have not effectively communicated risk issues on environmental degradation. It will be seen from the foregoing that media coverage / reportage of risk appears to be very low and limited only to the physical characteristics of the risk event. However, media report lacks long term effects of environmental degradation and psychological implication on public perception about such risk issues in the Niger Delta.

**Research Question 4:** What are the issues of trust between the Nigerian government, oil companies and the oil affected communities?

The issue of trust between the Nigerian government, oil companies and the oil affected communities is far from ideal. It will be seen in Chart 4 in chapter four, page 119 that trust in government / politicians and oil companies are in short supply. Chart 5 in chapter four, page 121 shows that the oil affected communities also hold these agencies responsible for the crisis in the Niger Delta region. It is indeed very clear from this study that the oil affected communities do not trust the operations of government and oil companies in their communities. Findings from this study also revealed that there are contentions over revenue allocation and corruption among the three tiers of government which also has affected trust over further increase of monthly allocation to states and local government by the federal government. However, the federal government dominates other arms of government at state and local government level to favour the course of operations by oil companies in the Niger Delta region. This shows that the federal government of Nigeria and oil companies seem to have semblances of trust for each other in their dealings with the oil host communities. It is also clear that trust for community representatives by their indigenes is far from ideal due to the divide and rule system the oil companies employ to divide the people. It is indeed plausible that distrust for community leaders, government and oil companies led to the agitation in the Niger Delta, and its purveyors – oil multinationals and the government – are beneficiaries. The victims are, of course, the indigenes of oil host communities (Niger Delta Crisis, 2000).

**Research Question 5:** Are there any strength or weaknesses of media exposure in influencing the Nigerian government's policy relating to the Niger Delta conflict?

It is very clear from the findings of this study that the media have more weaknesses than strength; however, media strength is still weakened because what the media report is usually not too balanced due to the weakness experienced by journalists with regards to the Niger Delta conflict and if media coverage affects changes or policy implementation at all, then, of course, the implication of such policy will not at all meet the actual needs



in the Niger Delta because the policy will only cover the aspect the media depicts and ignore other areas that media find it very difficult to access. In essence, policy implementation will have blind spots and will not effect the changes in the Niger Delta. The principal, in interview, acknowledges that the areas where media depicts is the focus of some policies, however, he contends that there should be a factor where the government is finally going to look into the origin of the conflict and why the violent agitation came up in the first instance, unfortunately, these issues have not been looked into (Interview, July 2009). It will be worth saying here that until all aspects of the conflict are adequately covered by the media without distortion or interference of any kind, the media will not be able to shape government policies in the right direction to solve the problems in the Niger Delta region. Hence, previous policies through the creation of commissions failed to meet the developmental needs and aspirations of the Niger Delta people partly because journalists lacked adequate information on issues in the Niger Delta region.

## 5.2 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Utilizing empirical analysis within a specific theoretical framework on risk communication, this study demonstrates that media-policy-public agendas face specific problems in influencing one another on environmental risk issues in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The areas of media, risk and policy have now been outlined, so identifying areas needing further attention and work by stakeholders in the public policy field with regards to the Niger Delta conflict.

In terms of media exposure and risk issues in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, it is indeed clear that the media are reporting the conflict; however, little or no attention is given to the underlining factor of the crisis - risk issues (Jimoh, 2008). Past research shows that media reporting on risk events tends to focus on the physical characteristics, ignoring multi-causal, long-term or hypothetical risk associated with environmental degradation and psychological implications on public perception about such risk issues (Bakir, 2008, Palfreman, 2006). This pattern is confirmed by this study on the Niger Delta region. Interestingly, lack of media attention to effective risk communication in the Niger Delta region reflects the gaps in knowledge in media-risk research within the Sociology of News identified by Bakir (2010). Bakir suggests that new directions (longitudinal, historic, contextual and interpretative) are needed in media risk-research, and it is these very attributes that are also needed for media institutions to effectively communicate risks at micro and macro levels – for instance, 'regarding policy-agenda-setting and modulating public acceptability of risks' (Bakir, 2010: 13). Apart from media giving little or no attention to risk issues on the Niger Delta, the media are also handicapped in information gathering on risk issues because the freedom of information bill has not been passed into law [for more, see Research Question 3 in chapter five]. This, of course, has serious implications on the operations of media institutions in Nigeria and thus, affects the flow of adequate information in the public policy / government sphere. It can be said that until this problem of access to information is solved, the media cannot effectively play their role in a democratic society; that is, not just on reportage of risk issues alone but on other facets of socio, economic and political issues of the nation. The complex /

problematic nature of the information bill directs the researchers' attention to what the print journalist refers to – where there is no access to information there is no press freedom (interview, July, 2009). The study revealed that the Nigerian press have improved since democracy was installed in Nigeria [see Chart 9 and 10, pages 131/133]; however, issues like government interference especially in government owned media and the problematic nature of the freedom of information bill makes it very difficult for the Nigerian press to be entirely free (Interview, Print and Broadcast journalist, July 2009). While the government owned media may follow a phase in dealing with societal issues such as the Niger Delta conflict (Interview, NTA journalist, July, 2009), both the government and private owned media seem to be lacking in creating a resuscitated public sphere on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict. The failure of the Nigerian media in generating an active public sphere has led to gaps in knowledge on the mismatch between people's perceptions of the risk in the Niger Delta, the diverging interpretations this generates and how these interpretations interact with the media practices when reporting on the risks. In this vein of study, the Nigerian media should pay greater attention to how visible risk debates between stakeholders can help to shape the public policy field on pressing issues in Nigeria especially the Niger Delta conflict. Following on from previous points, some of the issues raised about Nigerian journalism would clearly have financial consequences, given that this study identified [very interestingly] financial constraints as one of the factors which restrict journalists' ability to access some of the pertinent geographical areas [environmental degradation / conflict zones] [together with other constraints relating to logistics and equipments]. This, in turn, raises more general issues of funding and ownership. However, the private and government owned media outfit will be more effective in terms of covering the most imperative aspects of the Niger Delta conflict [including risk issue], perhaps, if they are adequately funded as they will be self reliant when gathering information rather than getting information from official sources.

Trust is problematic and in short supply between competing agencies - the media, policy-makers and the public. Accordingly, in interview, the print journalist asserts that the government view journalists with suspicion and sees journalists as their enemies because they have something to hide and that is why the freedom of information bill has not been

passed into law (interview, July, 2009). Chart 4 in chapter four, page 119 revealed that public trust for government / politicians is in short supply, but that the media was the most trusted of all agencies. This outcome tends to affect the media-public-policy field in response to the Niger Delta conflict. It is particularly revealing from this study that the lack of mutual trust between journalists, policy-makers and lay public have made it difficult for key institutions to positively effect change towards issues in the Niger Delta region. In understanding how trust interacts with risk communication geared toward policy change on risk issues in the Niger Delta, this study revealed that Nigerians trust the media more than any other institution involved directly or indirectly in the crisis. However, despite public trust in media, it is indeed clear that the media cannot influence the public on policy issues due to lack of trust for policy makers. This research confirms previous assertions that social trust in risk communicators and policy-makers 'cannot be assumed but must be cultivated and maintained with key audiences prior to, and during, risk communication' (Bakir, 2006: 16) and policy implementation. Where trust in government / politicians is in short supply, this, of course, will definitely affect public acceptance of policy decision. Thus, abstract systems depend upon trust, hence, active trust must be won and maintained (Giddens, 1990, also see Bakir and Barlow, 2007; Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006). In terms of research focus, trust emerges as a pertinent field needing further exploration, and future empirical studies into policy-agenda setting could examine, productively, how trust in expert systems affects the media-public-policy field in terms of risk issues in the Niger Delta region.

Policy formulation / implementation in form of a commission by the government is heavily viewed with suspicion as previous commissions over the years did not work and did not effect change to either the environmental or living standards of the oil host communities. In interview, the principal acknowledges that government policies through interventionist agencies seem to ignore the root cause of the conflict – risk issues (interview, July, 2009). Other government policies that should look at environmental degradation are problematic in terms of enforcement (interview, policy-maker, July, 2009) and that is the reason why oil companies will continue to use the cheapest way of production, for instance, dispersing untreated waste into the rivers and atmosphere since

the polluter [oil companies] does not have to include them in its production cost. Greene referred to this act as the 'tragedy of the commons', where access to a common resource is unregulated and not checked by pre-existing laws, each user continues to take advantage of the situation to the maximum destructive conclusion, 'even if each user involved is well intentioned, well informed, and exercising only its traditional and legal rights' (2006: 459). Meanwhile the cost / consequences of such unregulated activities and over exploitation by oil companies is shared by all of the oil host communities (Greene, 2006). The indigenes of oil host communities will continue to act until the Nigerian government effectively enforces pre-existing laws, abolishes laws that are controversial and problematic like the degree act of 1978 and introduces more effective policies amenable to change. It is the responsibility of the Nigerian government to develop modern techniques for overseeing its citizens and achieving national goals. It will be recalled from the literature review that within the conceptual framework of Foucauldian perspective, risk and safety are seen as fundamental facets of authority and domination and however a plan for the government of societies (Zinn and Taylor-Gooby, 2006), which have therefore added to the manufacturing of certain kinds of rationalities, schemes and subjectivity (Lupton, 1999, for more on governmentality perspectives see Denney, 2005). Thus, most would agree that state control and regulations is an effective way to oversee the welfare of its citizens and managing the local or national resources within its territory, for this reason, it is the responsibility of the Nigerian government to be strong in enforcing its laws to protect citizens from harm (Greene, 2006). In terms of research focus, policy emerges as a pertinent field needing further exploration and further empirical studies into policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria's Niger Delta region could examine, productively, how the current president [who assumed office in May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010 after the death of the former president Yar, Adua in May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010] will effect changes in Nigerian policy with regards to the Niger Delta region.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding the gaps in media exposure, policy-agenda setting and risk communication through theoretical and methodological advances in this research, the following recommendations are made by the researcher to assist the Nigerian government / policy makers, media, oil companies and indigenes of oil host communities to understand thereby bridging the gap surrounding the Niger Delta conflict. The areas that should be given priority attention are as follows.

First, the twist in the Niger Delta conflict, is that, while the indigenes of the Niger Delta are agitating and trying to influence government to bring development to the region, the people are also divided and having conflict among themselves at community level over oil funds given by oil companies through the use of the divide and rule system. This system used by these oil companies to pay compensation or bring about change through community projects is indeed problematic and produces more losses than gain and thus, affects government efforts to bring a lasting solution to the Niger Delta conflict. The government should introduce a legitimate way / policy for oil production companies to pay adequate compensation to the right people in the oil producing communities rather than oil companies going through community leaders / representatives. The oil companies should be more transparent in their dealings with oil host communities, that is, show willingness to partake in community development, curtail their waste product and quickly attend to environmental degradation whenever it occurs to prevent harm to life and economic embarrassment to the host communities. It will be seen from this study that public trust for oil companies is almost non-existent; however, if the oil companies continue to operate in the same way, they will continue to experience opposition from communities where they operate and it will lead to more closures of oil wells which will in turn affect the nation's oil receipts.

Second, this study showed more weaknesses than strength for media, and even the media strength is weakened. This, of course, on the one hand, raises the issue of access to information; journalists argue that where there is no access to information, there is no

press freedom (interview, print journalist, July, 2009). In order for a democratic society like Nigeria to function adequately, the government should sign into law the freedom of information bill to assist journalists in their access to information. The potency of the freedom of information bill, if passed into law, will create a resuscitated public sphere as citizens / institutions can get access to public information through dialogue, debate and discussion, thereby generating trust between the government, media and citizens. The information bill will give media institutions liberty to report information without restriction or fear of being harmed (Ashong and Udouo 2008; Olusola, 2008). Furthermore, government interference / control on the operations of media should not be encouraged if there is to be total press freedom in Nigeria. Accordingly, the Nigerian government should work closely with journalists in order for them to adequately know the areas needing policy change or urgent attention. However, beyond changes to government policy, journalists need to address their own risk reportage. When covering risk events in the Niger Delta, journalists should not report only the physical events of the risk, there is need to cover the psychological, longitudinal, historical, contextual effects and how it relates to the environmental and living standard of the indigenes of the oil host communities. This study also identified financial constraints as one of the factors which restrict journalists and Nigerian environmental agencies' ability to get adequate information on risk issues as they find it difficult to access some of the relevant geographical regions. The Nigerian media [government and private] are in need of funding to enable journalists work out their reports correctly through the provision of logistics / adequate equipments in order for journalists to have easy access to the relevant geographical areas to get first hand information. In addition, this research suggests that the Nigerian government should adequately fund / provide environmental agencies with contemporary equipments / logistics to enable them access relevant geographical areas where risk issues [environmental degradation] have occurred and also encourage research on the effect of environmental degradation in order to acquire accurate information on risk issues / events rather than go through oil companies for information. The media, government, oil companies and community leaders should regularly organise debates, forums and seminars in form of public spheres in oil host communities in order to explore

the flows and impacts of trust, understand the diverse knowledge of risk awareness and experiences of locals to help shape and direct policy agenda setting in the right directions.

Third, issues over how development should be brought to the Niger Delta in form of policies through the creation of government commissions is still unresolved, disputed and viewed with doubts as previous commissions failed. It will be seen from this study that indigenes of the Niger Delta are not sure and do not believe the creation of another ministry will solve the problems in the Niger Delta or end the conflict. Here, the issue of trust and accountability is raised, not just on the creation of policies but their implementation. This shows that government policies in all areas linked to the Niger Delta conflict is in need of review, that is, existing policies that does not work or is controversial should be scrapped and new polices amenable to changes should be introduced in order to effectively meet the challenges in the Niger Delta region. This suggests that the Nigerian government [federal, state, local] should be more transparent, accountable and act responsibly in their dealings with the Niger Delta problems especially with the revenue meant for the purpose of development in the Niger Delta region.



**APPENDIX 1 (Quantitative study)**

Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries,  
Dept of Media and Communication,  
The Atrium,  
University of Glamorgan,  
Cardiff, Wales,  
United Kingdom.  
CF24 2FN.

Dear Respondents,

I am a research student at Glamorgan University, UK, currently in the second year of my Doctorial study. My research investigates Media Exposure, Policy Agenda-Setting and Risk Communication in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). A Case Study of Nigeria's Niger Delta Region. The selected areas for this survey are Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State; and the target population are individuals both male and female of twenty-one years and above.

Taking part in this survey is completely voluntary. I hope you will provide the best possible information about your views and experiences as your co-operation is fundamental to the conduct of this research and your answers are valued. If it is easier for you, please ask a friend or family member to help you fill in the questionnaire, but please make sure the answers given are about your views and experiences, not theirs. On completion of the questionnaire please return to the bearer as soon as possible.

Once the survey is completed, answers will be securely confidential. Only the anonymised overall result will be used for this study; after which, the questionnaires will be securely destroyed.

If you have any more questions or need further assistance filling in the questionnaire, please contact me on [edafienekingsley@yahoo.com](mailto:edafienekingsley@yahoo.com) or call +234 (0) 7039763658.

Thank you very much for your time

Yours sincerely

Edafienene .A. Kingsley.

Thank you for taking time to answer these questions. Please answer the questions in section A and B by ticking in one box for each question. Your response will be completely confidential.

### **SECTION A:**

- Q1** Are you male or female? Male  Female
- Q2** Please indicate your age range 21-30  31-40  41 or above
- Q3** Where are you resident? Delta  Bayelsa  Rivers
- Q4** What is your profession? Student  Employed  Unemployed

### **SECTION B:**

**Q1** Which is most important to you when getting information on the Niger Delta crisis?

- A:** Television  **B:** Radio  **C:** Newspaper  **D:** Magazine  **E:** Internet   
**F:** Fiction film  **G:** Word of mouth  **H:** Other

**Q2** In general, how satisfied are you with media reporting and coverage on the Niger Delta crisis?

- A:** Very satisfied  **B:** Fairly satisfied  **C:** Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   
**D:** Fairly dissatisfied  **E:** Very dissatisfied

**Q3:** Do you think the media has brought the risks of environmental degradation to government attention through heavy media coverage?

- A:** Yes  **B:** No  **C:** Don't know

**Q4:** Who do you trust to tell the truth on risk events (environmental degradation) linked to the conflict in Niger Delta?

- A:** Media institutions  **B:** Government  **C:** Private agencies  **D:** Oil companies   
**E:** Politicians  **F:** Pressure groups

**Q5:** Who, in your opinion, should be held responsible for the conflict in Niger Delta?

- A:** Government  **B:** Oil companies  **C:** Militants  **D:** Organised Interest group   
**E:** Community leaders  **F:** Indigenes of oil host communities  **G:** Politicians   
**H:** International community

Please give reasons for your answer in the box provided below

**Q6:** How do you perceive the risks of environmental degradation caused by oil companies to humans, plants and animals in the Niger Delta?

**A:** Very high risk  **B:** High risk  **C:** Low risk  **D:** Very low risk

**Q7:** Who precisely, would you say, most shapes your awareness about risks of environmental degradation caused by oil companies in Niger Delta?

**A:** Culture  **B:** Religion  **C:** Interest group  **D:** Individuals   
**E:** Media  **F:** Government  **G:** Internet  **H:** Destiny / Luck

Please give reasons for your answer in the box provided below

**Q8:** How often does the media offer indigenes of oil host communities the opportunity to partake in a public debate with policy makers on environmental degradation and the conflict in Niger Delta?

**A:** Very often  **B:** Often  **C:** Rarely  **D:** Very rarely

**Q9:** How would you categorise press freedom in present day democracy in Nigeria?

**A:** Very free  **B:** Fairly free  **C:** Neither free nor repressed   
**D:** Fairly repressed  **E:** Very repressed

**Q10:** Do you think press freedom has actually become better or worse since democracy was installed in Nigeria?

**A:** Better  **B:** Worse

**Q11:** How would you rate the environmental standard of operation by oil companies in the Niger Delta?

**A:** Very high standard  **B:** High standard  **C:** Neither high nor low standard   
**D:** Low standard  **E:** Very low standard

**Q12:** Do you think the environmental standard of oil companies has changed for the better or worse since democracy was installed in Nigeria?

**A:** Better  **B:** Worse

Please give reasons for your answer in the box provided below

**Q13:** How would you describe the quality of life in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta?

**A:** Very high quality  **B:** High quality  **C:** Neither high nor low quality   
**D:** Low quality  **E:** Very low quality

Please give reasons for your answer in the box provided below

**Q14:** Have you or anyone in your community suffered casualties as a result of government military operation with militants in the Niger Delta?

**A:** Yes  **B:** No

**Q15:** How would you describe government response to the plight of indigenes in oil host communities in the Niger Delta in cases of environmental pollution?

**A:** Very quick  **B:** Quick  **C:** Neither quick nor slow  **D:** Slow   
**E:** Very slow  **F:** No response

**Q16:** In general, how would rate government performance to end the Niger Delta conflict through the provision of basic amenities in the region?

**A:** Very good  **B:** Good  **C:** Neither good nor poor  **D:** Poor   
**E:** Very poor

**Q17:** Do you think the creation of Ministry of Niger Delta alongside the operation of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) will end the conflict in the Niger Delta?

**A:** Yes  **B:** No  **C:** Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer in the box provided below

**Q18: Who, in your opinion, engages more in developmental projects in the Niger Delta?**

**A:** NDDC  **B:** Federal government  **C:** State government   
**D:** Local government  **E:** Oil companies  **F:** Others

**Q19: Considering the widespread gas flaring in the Niger Delta, do you think it is contributing to global warming?**

**A:** Yes  **B:** No

**Q20: Are you aware of any time when indigenes of oil producing communities in Niger Delta ignored warnings of the risk involved in disrupting oil pipe lines from authorities that led to casualties or deaths?**

**A:** Yes  **B:** No  **C:** If yes, please give an instance

## APPENDIX 2 (Qualitative study)



Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries,  
Dept of Media and Communication,  
The Atrium,  
University of Glamorgan,  
Cardiff, Wales,  
United Kingdom.  
CF24 2FN.

Dear Respondents,

I am a research student at Glamorgan University, UK, currently in the second year of my Doctorial study. My research investigates Media Exposure, Policy Agenda-Setting and Risk Communication in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). A Case Study of Nigeria's Niger Delta Region. The surveys are across three states in Nigeria namely; Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State, and the target population for the interview are with a range of key people whose profession deals directly or indirectly with environmental degradation by oil companies and the conflict in the Niger Delta (policy-makers, community leaders, journalists, PR officials of oil companies, federal and state environmental agencies and organised interest groups).

Taking part in this interview is completely voluntary. I hope you will provide the best possible information about your views and experiences as your co-operation is fundamental to the conduct of this research and your answers are valued. The interview will last about an hour or an hour and a half; please ensure that there would be no distraction during the interview. The instrument that will be used to store information during the interview is the tape recorder as it will help guide against the researcher substituting the words of expressed opinion of the interviewee for his.

Once the interview is completed, answers will be securely confidential. Only the anonymised overall result will be used for this study; after which, the tape used for the interview will be securely destroyed.

If you have any more questions or query on this before the set date of the interview, please contact me on [edafienekingsley@yahoo.com](mailto:edafienekingsley@yahoo.com) or call +234 (0) 7039763658.

Thank you very much for your time

Yours sincerely

Edafienene .A. Kingsley.

## **TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW**

**Introduction:** I am Kingsley Edafienene, a research student at University of Glamorgan, United Kingdom. I am currently conducting research on Media Exposure, Policy Agenda-Setting and Risk Communication in Sub-Saharan Africa, using Nigeria's Niger-Delta region as my case study.

### **INTERVIEW 1: JOURNALIST (BROADCAST MEDIA) DELTA STATE**

**Question 1: As a journalist, how would you rate media performance with regards to the Niger Delta conflict?**

I think the reporting has been balanced, it has been exposing, in the sense that the media because of the difficult terrain of the Niger Delta they have gone the extra mile to get information from the militants on the one hand and government on the other. I will say media performance is above average, lets say 70 percent so far because most of the information they get is from the militants. The militants will either send their information through text messages, emails or telephone calls. More often than not, some of these claims by the militants are not verifiable because it is from what they tell journalists that they write, but at times journalists go the extra mile by reaching out to the Joint Task Force (JTF) of the Niger Delta Crisis who at times take journalists down to those areas to see for themselves; but more often that not, the coverage is based on what they hear, receive as text messages, information they get through emails by these militants in Niger Delta. I think media performance is above average.

**Question 2: What are the factors that determine journalists' commitment to truth and balance when reporting issues on environmental degradation (such as pipeline explosion, oil spills) in the Niger Delta region?**

It is accessibility, journalists report will not be balance if they don't have access to such areas where there is pipeline vandalism and others. If journalists don't have access and

don't see for themselves, then journalist report may not be balanced but if journalists see for themselves what is going on like the degradation you are talking about then their report may be balanced. At times journalists visit these areas affected by oil spillage and other environmental pollution and based on these events, they write and what they write is essentially based on what they see and so with news writing, facts are based on what you see and not what you imagine. First, access to the information is imperative. Second, given the kind of society we are in Nigeria, access to information is always very difficult because government wants to cover up and even the oil companies wants to cover up, so more often than not, government media outfit tend to succumb to government side, it is only the private media outfit like guardian, vanguard and others that tend to report a little bit above average in the sense that their reporting may not be too balanced because of this lack of access to information.

**Question 3: Considering the enormity and diversified nature of the Niger Delta conflict, has the media in any way drawn attention through in-depth and interpretative reporting to the risk posed by environmental degradation?**

Yes, I think they have to a very large extent that is why the world is now aware of what is going on in the Niger Delta. Apart from the CNN and the BBC, more often than not, the information international news outfit get are from the local media. By constantly reporting the Niger Delta, the media have been able to draw the attention of the international community to the plight of those in the Niger Delta. I think the media have done a very fantastic job. Since this crisis started there is no day you read any national paper that you won't see a report on the Niger Delta crisis, either front page, centre spread or back page, so they have to a very large extent done well and attracted the world's attention to the plight of those in the Niger Delta.



**Question 4: In the event of environmental degradation such as pipeline explosion / oil spills, who are the sources that provide journalists with information?**

First, the affected communities normally cry out, like I said the oil companies will want to suppress it, they don't even want it published, they want to make sure they attend to it quickly and hide it under the carpet, but the communities because of delay in attending to such oil spills will cry out in form of press conferences, press releases to the media before the oil companies will kind of do a press release to also tell the world but it may be too late because by then, they must have carried a different side of the story which have to do with the community before the oil companies will go to the affected community and do a routine task by covering up the exact stooping of water above and what they are doing to attend to the oil spill.

**Question 5: How often and in what ways does the media offer indigenes of oil host communities the opportunity to partake in a public debate with policy makers on environmental degradation and the conflict in the Niger Delta?**

What they do, they normally organise workshops, apart from organising workshops for journalists they also organise workshops for most oil host communities where they educate them on their activities and what they are doing to alleviate their sufferings in the Niger Delta. The government also on its part normally organise workshops, town hall meetings and sensitization visits to these oil producing communities. It is essentially the avenue they use to let the people know of their activities. Although, it is not too frequent, because you discover that it is only when there is a problem that they will embark on this fire brigade approach of trying to call the people together and sensitize them but it is not frequent, may be they do it once, twice or three times in a year. The one that is more frequent, like for the journalists, they do it twice a year, some companies do it once a year but the government normally do it more often than even the oil companies.

**Question 6: Have the press always been free from repression in Nigeria?**

No, there is no where in the world that the press is free, even in the United State and Britain. Although, in Britain, you discover that, like what is going on in the house of parliament over MPs expenditure, where there are claims from the news agencies that have been running it since the day the news broke. In Nigeria, not so, when you talk of press freedom, we can say its eighty percent but the repression is there in terms of closing down of media houses, in terms of not giving access to the media, lack of access to information. It is a little bit better under the democratic settings than it was during the military regime but in total the press is not free. Press freedom is better now, far better than what we use to obtain in the military era because in the military era there was nothing like freedom, you write what they want you to write but even in the state owned media outfit there is nothing like freedom, you can't write against the state. The state owned media outfit is more like a public relation organs of government, it is only the national papers or Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) that are kind to show a semblance of print, but generally if you want to analyse, the press have more freedom now than during the military era because this is a democratic setting. More importantly because the outside world is watching and the image of Nigeria has been dented over the years, so in order to re-brand the image of this country (Nigeria) the government now allow a little bit of freedom but all the same it is better now than what it use to be in the military era.

**Question 7: Has the press in anyway gotten better or worse since the installation of democracy in Nigeria?**

Yes, it has gotten better, if you pick the newspapers you will know it has gotten better even the government state owned radio and television now criticize but constructive criticism, just pick any national newspaper you will see that from the first page to the last page there are reports of fraud, corruption and all forms of vices that you can mention. The press is growing in Nigeria, like some of these governors that were arrested, some of the activities of fraudulent people in the society or these politicians, it is the press that is responsible for drawing the attention of these anti-corruption agencies to them. Without

the press, if it doesn't break as news, the agencies will not act even if they know such things exist, I think there is growth in all areas of both the print and electronic media.

**Question 8: As regards Niger Delta conflict, do media institutions or journalists go after stories that sell or facts?**

Story that sell is what the media go for, what obtains in Britain is what is obtained in Nigeria, we have this no culture of reading, people prefer to listen more to radio than reading newspapers because they don't have time, for media to sell, their story must be away from the ordinary, it must be exclusive, so they write sensational reports and headlines to draw the attention of the people, it goes beyond the normal news reporting, story must be put in such a way that it will attract the reader and in doing that, they fall short of some of this ethics of information.

**Question 9: Overall, what are your views on media depiction and the Niger-Delta conflict?**

I think the media is reporting what is going on in the Niger Delta; I believe that, if they are given proper access to the affected areas, their reports will be comprehensive and balanced, but more often than not like I said, their reports are based on what they hear or what they get as emails or reactions from the militants and also from the government side. I strongly believe that the media have done well because they have been able to attract the attention of the world to the plight of those in the Niger Delta and the media have also been able to make government to bend backwards to do some of those things they couldn't have done over the years, like the setting up of the Niger Delta Ministry, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), a lot of intervention agencies to enhance the welfare of those in the Niger Delta, if not for the media these things wouldn't have come to pass. I believe that with time and with more access, funding and openness on both side, on the side of the militants and government, media will excel.

**INTERVIEW 2: EDITOR / JOURNALIST (PRINT MEDIA) DELTA STATE****Question 1: In what ways does the operation of print media differ from broadcast media when reporting on the Niger Delta conflict?**

This print media is hundred percent owned by the government and we have a focus and the focus is to report and sell Delta State. We are not competing with any other newspaper, we have a definite function to perform and that is exactly what we are doing and fortunately Delta is part of the Niger Delta so whatever we do we encroach on the Niger Delta, we speak for the Niger Delta. The major difference between the print and electronic is very clear and permanent. The print is a permanent form, the electronic comes and goes and that is why they sue the newspaper on various occasions than the electronics because no body is interested to record what is said even if you record, you can only record the voice and not with pictures because Nigeria is not as sophisticated as developed countries where they have facilities to carry out such functions. If the print documents, you will find out that in the next hundred years to come you can still keep in touch, but if I ask you what was said on television or radio yesterday, you may not be able to tell me except of course you have retentive memory so it is very clear.

**Question 2: Are there any forms of limitations associated with the print media in reaching out to the rural oil producing communities on issues relating to the Niger Delta conflict?**

Absolutely no, I will be very open because you are doing a research, if am talking to a government official I withhold certain information but I will be very opened with you. This administration (present government, 1997) came in with a three point agenda and the first agenda is peace and security so whatever we are reporting we have the first agenda at the back of our mind that this administration wants to maintain peace and security so anything that will counter peace and security you may not see it on our newspaper but anything that promotes peace and security we are ready so you can see the trail line. If there is any gagging, it is not visible to the eyes, it is only those who are

inside that will know exactly what is happening, those outside may not know; like any other newspaper too, the proprietor matters a lot. They accuse this newspaper for not talking against the government, yes. I was reading the guardian newspaper when you came in; the guardian also will not see anything wrong with their proprietor and tribune newspaper will not see anything wrong with its proprietor, when concord newspaper was on, concord did not see anything wrong with the proprietor so the state newspaper or government newspaper is not an exception. The government is there to serve the people so anything that promotes that service is what we are ready to propagate.

**Question 3: Are there any challenges faced by the print media in the production and sales of newspaper?**

Yes, very much, the challenges are enormous. First of it is funding, newspaper production is capital intensive, so many things go into newspaper production that the price is prohibiting. Is it the chemical? Is it man power? Is it the computer? So many things go into the production of newspaper so it is very capital intensive that is why very few people go into it, funding is a major part. Second, one form or the other of interference is another, then adequate personnel is the other factor. However, funding is the most important part because when you have enough funds then you can provide the facilities, if the facilities are not there, then there is nothing you can do. Considering the epileptic power supply, electricity is also a major factor to put into account because when you came yesterday there was no electricity supply and the generator was faulty and if the government says they can't afford generator for now, then what can we do? You know, it is only 350 kg generator that can power this place and yesterday it was the small generator that was on, until the government decides to provide us with a generator that can power this place, so funding remains a major factor because every other thing surrounds it.

**Question 4: Does the print media in any way amplify or down play the risk of environmental degradation and conflict in the Niger Delta region?**

Yes, it is a running battle, why I say it is a running battle is that the oil companies don't want you to mention anything about degradation but if you go to the oil producing areas you will know that a lot of damage has been done to the people that reside there. I happen to know much because I consult for shell, I am one of those that if shell is doing anything, they call on me to deliver one lecture or the other, they take me round and I see a lot even this creek they are talking about it was shell that took me on tour because I was delivering papers on the activities of the militants as it affects shell. I said I will not talk whatever that I have not seen so they sponsored the trip to the creeks, the first time I can now tell you that I know what can be called creeks. I happen to know that a lot of damage has been done to the surroundings and to the creeks but sometimes because of company's corporate image; they try to hide some of the things they are doing. However, the print you can not hold them back because it is one of their social responsibilities they owe to the people to report the things they know or to report the things they heard which they have confirmed. The print is doing a lot to expose some of these things that are being hidden by these international companies because they want to operate and go, they have nothing at stake and they are being aided by some Nigerians who also came from some of these states and that is why they can come to Nigeria to dump toxic waste and go. Who is interested when the society is not enlightened enough to know the consequences of the action of this people, there is nothing that happens in this country that is not been aided from within. It is difficult for a white man to come and do damage in this country without a Nigerian been involved, Nigerians aid and abate in one way or the other. The degradation they are talking about, one or two persons must have conspired to take what ever belongs to the community, as far as that is concerned. The white man you know them, they will say they have paid for the damage done to the environment and to the people but when you critically look at it you will find out that it is the wrong person they gave the money and the people continue to complain.

**Question 5: Are there any form of control or self-censorship practiced by journalists or editors when reporting on the Niger Delta conflict? If yes, what are the implications of such practices?**

Like I told you, nobody will come out to say they don't do this or do that; as a profession you know what to do when you are reporting an event. The censorship comes when they find out that you are not just creating what is right, I have always told people that there are two sides to a report and its like a coin, the coin has two sides, hence there is always the need to balance your report. For example, if we are reporting an event on the Niger Delta and we take only the government side that means we have erred, what we do is to also look at the people's side, they must have something to say. Whether you believe it or not, let the reader find out or be the judge, for instance, if somebody calls you to order and say don't report one side of the story also take a look at the other side in order for you to have a balanced report, it is not censorship but just correction. Censorship is when the clear sets of people say don't do this, but as far as I know, nobody has said so in the reportage of the Niger Delta. The main thing, always ensure you balance your story because it is injustice to look at one side of the story, the coin that has one side is fake likewise the report that carries one side of the story. However, taking two side of a story, in that sense there is no censorship, but in clear case of censorship, you are asked not to report a side of the story even if you are seeing it, don't report it. I have never seen the government or any media owner take such a step to report only one side of a story, the only thing they will sound into your ear is always ensure you balance your report. Unfortunately, some media proprietor will not be proud to tell you that when they want to be mischievous they report one side of a story and that is when you have crisis. A report that has one side is an avenue to crisis because you can't step on someone's toes and expect them to keep quite, they will react to what have been said and in such case there is no censorship. However, a correction is not censorship but that is what people will assume to be censorship.

**Question 6: As an editor in a government print media, are there directives from the government on what to publish on the Niger Delta conflict?**

I think I have answered this question indirectly, there is none, but that is not to say they don't call us to order, not to put fire into an already burning place. What do I mean, an event has taken place in the Niger Delta, instead of reporting what has happened, journalists go ahead to report what they have not seen, I will give you an example; When the Joint Task Force (JTF) (government soldiers) invaded Gbaramatu (an oil producing community in the Niger Delta), the report we heard including our own reporter said there were no survivals in the place, everything in the community went down. The governor took some press men including the person who sent us that report on a tour to Gbaramatu. When they got there, the governor said what I am seeing is different from what the media have reported. The media have reported that there was no soul left, no building and nothing left in the place but what are we seeing today? I have used this to give you an example of what I mean that there is nothing like that, except of course, when they want to do things right and that is not censorship. During the military and in any administration nobody will say don't report this or that.

**Question 7: How in-depth and interpretative does the print media report on the risk associated with environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region?**

To a very large extent there is handicap, and the handicap is that people are not ready to give you the facts especially the government sector and that is why reportage on environmental degradation is on the low side; either they don't know or they deliberately withhold the information and without such information, how far can you go? Journalists work like the police, without a tip you can't do anything and that is one of the reasons why the Nigerian press have been pushing for the freedom of information bill to make a law for any government official to willingly give you any information you ask for. Unfortunately, the bill has been in the national assembly for years, it is either they want to kill it or throw it out because nobody wants to open or give information and that is a major factor and it is affecting the report from the government angle. If you go to the



creeks they are talking about and ask question, you will be surprised at the answers you get, I was in a town hall lecture in Warri [a city in Delta State] where they invited some of these traditional rulers and other notable persons to the meeting and when shell asked them what they wanted in their communities, some of them preferred to be taken to the United States to spend holiday to the detriment of their people, others said give me the money you want to give to my people, only me will take the money to them, I speak for them so whatever you are going to give it will pass through me. Contrast to this, if you ask somebody that you think is enlightened, what is happening by way of environmental degradation you will be amazed what they will say, a different thing all together, so ignorance is a factor.

**Question 8: Who are the sources journalists get their information from when they are not on hand to cover environmental degradation and conflict the way they have occurred in the Niger Delta?**

The Niger Delta is not an exception; the sources of information that are available to the press are very many. First, you can use the people as the source of information, people who are experienced and live in the community where the incident has occurred, you talk to them and interview them because they will be able to know. Second, post documentation of what is available if you come across them because they can be very useful piece of information. The radio, television and newspapers already published there sources of information but the most reliable are those who experienced it, you can not fault it because they are the participant people who live in the area and know much of what has happened. The problem we sometimes encounter when trying to get information on issues arising from the Niger Delta is how enlightened are the people living in the affected communities.

**Question 9: In the event of government military operation in search for militants and protesters in the oil producing communities, are journalists given access to the affected communities? If yes, do they report facts or sensationalize the report?**

I think I tried to pre-empt things when I gave you the example of the Joint Task Force (JTF) attack on Gbaramatu; it is a typical example of government invasion. Government invaded a place where they thought militants were hiding; the reports that came out was over exaggerated, like I said, the report that came to us was that the place was completely destroyed and there were no humans, animals or buildings remaining until the governor got there and found out that the reports were twisted. It was an alarm raised that the community was invaded, but when it was shown on television you could see humans, domestic animals and buildings apart from those they bombed. How do we limit our reports to facts, there are occasions when journalists go to the water side (creeks) in Warri, hearing that there was crisis in a village, nobody saw the number of deaths, I used this as an example in a lecture in Warri, I got hold of five different newspaper and all of them gave different figures of deaths, no newspaper reported the same number of deaths. If you are a reader how will you know the truth of deaths that occurred? If you are an indigene of a place and you hear a large number of people in your community have been killed how will you react? Instead of bringing down tension in the area such alarmist report can increase tension which government may not be able to control, so if journalists base their reports on facts and not fiction then it will help the government to solve the problem. However, if journalists report is not facts but fiction or they imagine things even before getting to the place the incident occurred, it is wrong. Reports should be based on facts if we are to help the government solve a problem.

**Question 10: How would you describe press freedom in present day democracy?**

Press freedom is relative in the sense that what is freedom here may not be freedom elsewhere. You can not compare the Nigerian standard in terms of press freedom to what happens in Indian or even in South Africa. Press freedom where journalists are not allowed freedom to information and that is the genesis of this freedom of information bill.

It was sponsored by Nigerian Union of Journalist (NUJ) to have access to information; the government is still sleeping on it. When I gave a lecture a year ago, some people verbally attacked me on the bases of newspaper that I was aiding the government because I said that government may not be able to give a stable backing to the freedom of information bill. The government believe that journalists are their enemies so if you give them that freedom then they are not safe because they have something to hide, if they have nothing to hide then why will they delay to pass the freedom of information bill into law so that journalists can get access to information and that is what obtains; because of this handicap, we can not talk of press freedom, it is not there. As government continue to have vote of six, secret acts and others, they are laws that are holding back from signing into law the freedom of information bill, as long as these laws continue to reflect in our status quo, we can not talk about this bill. There are certain things you may not know as a general institution and there is a law to that effect, it is a colonial law, the whites made that law and the government have not been able to scrap it and that is what journalists wants them to do but because of one thing or the other they want to withhold, they don't want to do it; as long as that continues to happen we can not talk of press freedom.

**Question 11: What are your views on media representation on the Niger Delta conflict?**

My views are very personal, personal in the sense that I am not talking as a journalist. The Niger Delta is a very sensitive terrain and you may not believe, if you live in this country you will know that those in authority see journalists as enemies and most times when the government wants to set up committees to look into the conflict, they keep journalists away so they will not know what is happening in the affected communities, because they believe that if journalists are there they will be forced to write what is happening. They have forgotten too that a journalist is an added advantage to help them know the problem of the area and if journalists expose the problems of these areas, the problem is half solved but they are keeping many things out and it's what we know that we use. I believe that if the government does not have anything to hide they will not

delay in signing the information bill. Government hide from journalists, if they bring journalists close it will help solve the problem half way.

### **INTERVIEW 3: JOURNALIST [NIGERIA TELEVISION AUTHORITY] NTA**

**Question 1: As a journalist, are there any government media policies to consider before reporting key issues on the Niger Delta conflict?**

Yes there are, you see, the Niger Delta issue is a very touching issue, it is not something people should just delve into and speak random about. As a Nigerian, despite the fact I am a journalist, even when reporting an event that has occurred in the Niger Delta, you have to be accurate first and foremost. As a journalist you have a duty that you owe to the public to report what is happening at any particular place at any give time. However, when reporting you should be careful not to incite an unrest especially in the case of the Niger Delta issue, we know it is a very touching issue, we know it is capable of either making or marring the Nigeria context. Whatever you report, I want to give you an insight, I went to Gbaramatu kingdom with the governor of Delta state to see the extent of damage in the community, the first report that was written about the incident (JTF invasion) prior to the visit, was on a hear and say bases, some newspapers did not visit the community but because they heard or the people involved gave them a little leaflet, they wrote a story about it, talking of complete destruction and all what not. When we got to Gbaramatu with the same journalist that wrote the first story in the newspaper, he was shocked because the devastation he was talking about was not as much as it was portrayed. As a journalist, you have to be accurate in your report; it will help people know exactly what is happening, when it happened and how it happened especially in places like this. If we have not gone to Gbaramatu prior to the first information, we would have gone by the report we read from the newspapers, so even when you are reporting you should be careful because Nigeria does not need to be disintegrated. The problem in the Niger Delta is a problem that could have been solved before now anyway, but hence it was left to linger, that does not mean we should fuel it.

**Question 2: In the event of government military operation in search for protesters and militants in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta, are journalists given access to these affected region? If yes, are journalists allowed to report the incident the way it is without distortion?**

That brings us back to what I just said, you know, in a crisis situation journalists can not all move to that place for security reasons, security in the sense that when you are going into a war zone there are people that will make it possible for you to come there and be able to report, you don't just go at your own will, you are free to go there but can you get to the place? That is another thing. In our own case, government had to liaise with the soldiers that patrol the place and they created an avenue for the journalist to come in and have a first hand assessment and that was why we were able to go there and see things for ourselves and that was why we were able to write and produce video clips from a first hand information, having been at the scene, we conducted some interviews and that was how we knew what was going on there, no longer from grapevine. In essence, government aid journalists to get to certain areas especially in conflict situations. What's the second question? **Are journalists allowed to report the incident the way it is without distortion?** It is a two way thing; in all honesty it is a two way thing. If you say distortion, if you go into a war zone for instance, you have to pick your interview after picturing things for yourself, writing from your own perspective of things you see around you there, you need people who are on ground to also tell you what has been happening there before you came, now two people can say one thing from two different perspectives. The people who feel oppressed give you their own side of the story, the people who they think are the people oppressing them give you their own side of the story. It is now left for you to meet them in the middle; in essence, from point A it could be distorted some where, from point B it could be distorted so it is left for you to take what point B has said, what point A has said and put it out and let the public decide for themselves. I don't know if that constitutes distortion for the end user or reader, it is a relative term as well.

**Question 3: How often does journalists challenge the government and policy-makers on the risk associated with environmental degradation?**

As often as we can, it is not easy to confront the government; for example, there is no total freedom of the press, I am emphatic about that, there is no complete freedom of the press, a lot of factors contribute to it. When you voice out, some persons in some quarters will try to suppress what you are saying because they have the will power to do that. A typical example, is when you see some journalists been incarcerated because they gave reports on certain issues that some persons are involved who have personal interest in such areas, they don't want such report to be public knowledge so they try to suppress it. There are other ways to suppress it, some journalists have become gullible therefore they succumb to the idea and things like that, so you find out that they work out their reports as the case may be.

**Question 4: Are journalists in any way pro-government or propaganda machines for their proprietor when reporting issues on the Niger Delta conflict?**

Yes, yes, we are all just machines, we try to justify a lot of things, I don't know, opinion defers, yours could be different from mine as a journalist. This media agency is every government organ and we have to follow a phase, we try to do the two, even when we are reporting the truth as it were, we try to cushion the effect one way or the other; that is why I said that even when you report, you should make sure you are not inciting, so you don't excite conflict in other areas. As regards the issues of the Niger Delta, using Gbaramatu as an example, the first report that came out was this is what they did and all what not. Subsequent reports were aimed at what happened, how come it deteriorated to this extent for it to have taken this tune. In reality, follow up reports don't need to remind the people that their homes were destroyed, in our reports we also showed the cash and ammunitions that were recovered from the militants indicating that their struggle has already turned into criminality. Subsequent reports no longer showed cash and ammunitions, we no longer showed the destructions, we now show the riverine areas and say things have happened here and what is the way forward because the federal

government would not want a situation were you continue to show all these things about the conflict and then you aggravate the tension in the area because they have plans for the amnesty and for the amnesty to work, you don't have to continue to bring into focus these destructions as people will not accept it like that, people will see it different; they can turn a blind eye to what you are saying, because by trying to show them the past, they will remember about their destruction and give you deaf ears, if it will amount to this, then we don't need it.

**Question 5: How often does Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) broadcast conflict and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta on national news at 9pm?**

As often as possible, it all depends on the agro in the region. We tell you these things are there and then we try to tell you why they are there at this particular time, we report on what can be done to make sure things get better. Oil spillage in the Niger Delta by these oil foreign companies, we bring it to the notice of the whole world, why do we do that? So that the attention of the government and stakeholders will be drawn and they will begin to think of how to make things better and that is the essence why we always report things like this.

**Question 6: How would you describe press freedom in modern day democracy?**

We have not gotten there yet, I told you before, press freedom is a white elephant project, everybody wants it, yet nobody wants to make it happen. The legislators, when issues concerns them, they want their issues to be broadcasted but when it comes to someone else they want to suppress it because they feel if you give them the room they will go over the board and it will get to us also. It is neither there nor here, we are not there yet until they pass the freedom of information bill then we can have press freedom. As journalists, we do as much as we can and leave the rest to fate.

**Question 7: Does the government in any way suppress journalists report on the Niger Delta conflict?**

The three tiers of government [federal, state and local] have vested interest in the Niger Delta because it is the major source of income, the oil that comes from the oil wells; if anything will destruct the economic activities in that area, it will affect the whole country. Therefore, they are always on guard when it comes to anything concerning the Niger Delta. When government came together and thought about amnesty, they saw that continuous report of hard news concerning the Niger Delta will distort the amnesty plans. They made an appeal that reports coming from that area should be padded so that it will not initiate aggression. You as a journalist and as a Nigerian, you are a beneficiary of whatever comes from the area, from derivation that are distributed to states because you benefit from it indirectly or directly. Therefore, you will not want the crisis there to continue so when government tells you lets pursue peace to cushion the effect of all these things, as a human being, will you not go along with that, it doesn't mean you are telling lies, it doesn't mean you have buried the truth, it only means you are in a project of realising a better condition for everyone.

**Question 8: What are your views on media reporting and the Niger Delta conflict?**

The media has done a lot, if not for the media, government attention would not have been drawn to the issues in the Niger Delta, the people have been agitating for long, a lot of commission have been set up but have not been doing anything about the issues but with this current move by the media through writing, telecasting and other means of reaching out to the people; government saw the need to act because the situation in the Niger Delta was getting out of hand. The government started by creating the Niger Delta ministry and gave amnesty to militants. This all happened because the media came with full force to say the government have to do something to avert more conflict, if we haven't done that, I don't think anything will be done by now, Yes the media have done a lot.



**INTERVIEW 4: HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY [POLICY MAKER-ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE] DELTA STATE**

**Question 1: How would you describe the standard of environmental condition in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region?**

It is in a very bad state, the oil producing areas and their environment is polluted, it is devastated. It is a pity that you are here today; if you had come six months ago (January 2009), you would have seen what we are talking about live whenever there is oil spillage; the environment is totally devastated.

**Question 2: In the event of environmental degradation in oil producing communities, how does this information get to policy makers?**

The Delta State House of Assembly (DTHA) has passed a law requiring that under the ecology law 2005, all state ministry of environment should be informed whenever there is oil spillage, I doubt if they are actually informed. Whenever we have petitions from the oil host communities, it must have taken over four months before it gets to us.

**Question 3: Are there any mechanisms put in place to assess environmental degradation in oil host communities by policy makers?**

Yes, there are mechanisms, the state government has Delta State Environmental Protection Agency (DSEPA), and there are also federal government laws which ensures that when ever there is spillage, the oil exploration companies should inform these organs or agencies of government. The truth of the matter is that these things are not done, government have actually put in place these mechanisms but they are not been adhered to.

**Question 4: How fast do policy makers respond to the plight of indigenes of oil host communities in the event of environmental degradation?**

How fast? Is it in terms of compensation? or in terms of providing palliative measures? or in terms of putting a hold to where the spillage occurred? I don't know the area you want to look at, but the truth of the matter is that it takes a longer time for even government to respond to such situations, it takes a longer time.

**Question 5: Considering the wide spread of gas flaring and oil spillage in the Niger Delta, is it of concern to policy makers?**

Yes, it is of great concern to policy makers; when you look at gas flaring and oil exploration, the problem of the Niger Delta can be said to be of a national out look. Why I am saying it is a national out look is that the federal government per say have not put in place relevant laws so to say to arrest the situation of gas flaring. Not until two weeks ago (June- 2009) the senate passed a law on gas flaring and oil was discovered in Nigeria far back 1960s, till now they are just putting in place a law to stop gas flaring and that is a law, what of the implementation? so it is a big problem as federal government has not taken the bold step. Gas flaring, we were made to understand, was suppose to have stopped in 2006 but they keep on postponing it till this year 2009 and as we are talking today, the bill itself has not been accepted by the president, it was just passed by the senate, the house of representatives have not even passed it so it goes beyond what the host communities can do on their own because oil exploration as it were is of the exclusive risk in the constitution.

**Question 6: What are the causes of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region?**

Causes of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region is purely oil exploration, purely oil exploration and it has affected the environment badly.

**Question 7: Are there environmental laws in Nigeria? If yes, are these laws observed by oil companies and in what capacity do the government / policy makers enforce these laws?**

I will say yes and no, like I just said not until 2009 a law to prohibit the flaring of gas in Nigeria was just passed by the senate of the national assembly. Before then, we have had agencies like Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), which is a board of its own and other agencies that deals with oil exploration issues but the truth of the matter is that these agencies are not given the tips to implement either the guidelines or the law. In Delta State, the ecology law states that if there is an oil spillage and after twenty-four hours, it is not contained, then the companies involved in that act should pay compensation. Though I can't remember the said amount to be paid, but it is for each day and if you multiply the amount into one or two months it will run into millions of Naira but nobody enforces the law, nobody. I remember the last case we had between the host communities and Agip Oil Company. When Agip refused to pay compensation to the host community, the lawyer of the host community cited that part of the ecology law and when they found out that the law could be used they decided to use other means by either arresting the members of the host communities or using what I call divide and rule method, dividing the community against one another causing crisis and this is what they always do.

**Question 8: At present, are there any plans by policy makers to improve the standard of environmental condition in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta?**

Yes, there are plans; I would say there are plans because government is a progressive system and with these laws that are being presently passed by the senate, I believe that other laws are also being considered and do not forget that the problem of the Niger Delta is also a problem of decree 1978. The decree of 1978 has to do with the land use act and this have basically affected so many problems in the Niger Delta and with this climate change that the world is preaching, I think the government is actually looking at how they

can solve the Niger Delta problem. There are plans, here in Delta State we are thinking of how to bring in another law over the conservation law with a view to solving the ecological process of the environmental problems in the Niger Delta.

**Question 9: In what ways are the indigenes of the oil host communities compensated for their loss in the event of environmental degradation?**

In what ways? I don't know, but the truth of the matter, are they actually compensated? if there is an oil spillage in the community, the first thing that is suppose to be done, is to curtail the spillage and when that is not done the communities will rise up either to block the passage or to cause crisis in the area and if there is any crisis, the oil companies will report to government and before you know, these people are arrested, members of the host community are arrested. When they are arrested, it leads to another problem, so instead of paying compensation to them what the oil companies normally do is to divide them by picking one person, a prominent man in the community and say alright you are our peace maker and how much are we going to give you and the amount usually runs into millions of naira. This is not compensation; it is settlement because the oil company is settling one person in other not to pay compensation to the whole community.

**Question 10: What are the challenges policy makers encounter when enforcing and implementing laws in the state to curb environmental degradation?**

In 2003, there was oil spillage at Abalagada in Ndokwa east, before we could bring Agip to this office (DTHA) for investigation, it took a long time. Oil companies are aware that the economy of the nation is based on how much that is derived from oil revenue, they may decide not to comply and federal government will at every point in time back them. Even when you have these laws put together, if the oil companies are threatening to leave, there is a possibility that federal government will ask them to stay. There is little or nothing policy makers can effectively put in place because oil exploration is an exclusive thing, the State has little to do, the only thing they can do is to call the oil host communities together like we have always done in this office (legislative arm) or at the

executive arm of government; we invite the oil host communities and the oil exploration companies and see how we can resolve the crisis, that is how far we have gone.

**Question 11: What do you have to say about policy making and environmental laws in Nigeria?**

In general, policy making has been very slow concerning environmental laws in this country. I would rather say that government should try to put these things together, if you look at other countries the way oil exploration is being conducted, it is not the way it's done in this nation and that is because, like I said from 1958 till now, there have been no laws and when there are no laws, jungle law is the order of the day. First and foremost, the government should put proper laws into place. The government should try and see if the land use decree act of 1978 can be abolished as it will be a stepping stone. When land belongs to the owners of the community, everybody will see themselves as stake holders but as it were today, government owns the land, the community suffers from oil exploration, compensations are not paid, agricultural crops are not growing and economic activities are on stand still. I think the best way out is for the government to first and foremost abolish the land use decree of 1978, then begin to enact laws that are amendable to changes, laws that are in reality with the present situation so that the people of the oil host communities will begin to feel that the oil taken from their shore which is destroying their environment, when it is taken, something will be put back. When oil is taken and nothing is put back it is the people that suffer. Government should be able to ensure that if you take you put back, if one tree is fell from one place how many are you planting. The world is preaching about green house today, Nigeria is not talking about it; if you go to the mangrove farm in the Niger Delta, the whole mangrove farm is destroyed, the ecology is destroyed, how much are the oil companies putting back, nothing. There are also places oil is drilled at the centre of the community, if you go to other Niger Delta States, may be Rivers State or other communities you will see gas flaring on top of the communities, everybody in that areas suffers. A university in Lagos did a study in Warri, Delta State, they said because of the gas flaring and oil exploration, Warri as a city now suffers from acidic rain. What have government done since the outcome of that finding,

nothing. People dying from sudden death, different diseases, cancer and nothing is being done. Government should first and foremost, think of how to give palliative measures to communities that are producing the oil, that their environment is destroyed, that are having ecological problems. I think it is the best way to solve the major problem in Niger Delta today, all the crisis you see in the Niger Delta is as a result of environmental degradation. One day the oil will dry up and when it dries up and the oil companies have left, what will happen to the people leaving in the Niger Delta.

#### **INTERVIEW 5: MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT DELTA STATE**

##### **Question 1: How effective are environmental laws in the Niger Delta especially in the oil host communities?**

To some extent the laws are there, but it is the implementation that is some how a little bit faulty, they are not hundred percent adhered to. The environmental laws are many, we have the federal environmental laws, state environmental laws and at the local government level, we have bye laws. These oil companies often obey federal laws because they feel the federal government is the biggest and so whatever law they formulate takes care of state and local government. At the state level we have environmental laws on effluent discharge, ecological law and waste management laws. All these laws are in place and the oil companies do obey them but at times due to some constrains they find it difficult to obey. For example, when there is an oil spill, the communities stops the oil companies from cleaning up their mess unless they pay compensation first and the oil companies will say this is as a third party interference; in a situation like this, they can not just comply with the laws. Where such incident happens we often intervene in order for the communities to give peace a chance so that the oil companies can clean up the mess. We have forestry laws in the state and the oil companies do obey these laws, before they carry out any operations, if it is in the forest reserve, they often contact the department in charge of forest reserve and make sure that they enumerate the trees they want to damage and pay compensation to forestry department. In communal land, they pay compensation to land owners but the only

problem they encounter at times, is that they pay to the wrong hands; some community leaders collect this money and they don't give it to the actual owners of the land. Their land tenor system is individual family and so when somebody who is prominent in the community collects this money, it does not get to the actual family and these are some of the areas where conflict arises from.

**Question 2: How often does environmental degradation such as oil spill, pipe line explosion occur in the Niger Delta region?**

From reports getting across to us, we can not say its monthly; it comes as when not predicted but a good number of them occur.

**Question 3: What are the environmental implications of gas flaring in the Niger Delta?**

Gas flaring has its own tone, and in the Niger Delta, the policy to stop gas flaring has not been implemented so the environmental implication comes along with it as long as it is flared.

**Question 4: How would you rate environmental standard of oil producing communities in the Niger Delta?**

The environment whether in the Niger Delta or other oil producing communities as long as human activities occur there, it is bound to affect the environment. The oil production or oil prospecting in the Niger Delta has its own tone in environmental degradation. The environment in the Niger Delta is not as it were when oil was not being produced; now that oil exploration has been going on in the Niger Delta for so long the depreciation keeps coming, in terms of water quality, forest degradation and so on.

**Question 5: Does the oil multinationals observe the state environmental laws in their search for crude oil and during exploration?**

This is a difficult question in terms that most of the oil companies rely on federal, once they get their license from federal, they believe federal is everything, even when we tell them that the environmental issue is concurrent, they refer us to federal. They oblige federal laws than state laws and that is the bottom line.

**Question 6: In the event of environmental degradation in oil producing communities, which agency comes to their aid and how quick?**

In Nigeria so many agencies are doing one and the same thing, we don't even know who is carrying out these functions. I believe it's who gets there first that does the job. It depends on when the reports get to us and whether the logistics are available, like if it happens in remote areas where it is swampy, if you don't have boat and helicopter you can't get there. The agency that has these equipments will get there and do it and in most cases we rely on the proponents to take care of the logistics and take people to the site to do some assessment and whatever.

**Question 7: Are oil host communities compensated in the event of environmental degradation?**

Yes and no, in the sense that if the degradation is caused by third party no compensation. Third party, like vandals, criminality action; the oil companies will not pay compensation but if it is equipment failure, technical failures then they do something. It is the level of payment the oil host communities are talking about, the standard is very low. In most cases the level of compensation does not match the actual level of destruction.



**Question 8: Are there mechanisms put in place to end gas flaring?**

All along the federal government gave target for 2008, and then it went to 2010 that all oil companies should stop gas flaring, between 2008 till now, there has been a lot of gas gathering, injection of gas into oil wells to stop flaring but the rate at which the oil companies are reducing it is rather too slow, not that I will say there are no mechanism to stop flaring but when gas flaring will eventually stop I can not tell you.

**Question 9: What are your views on environmental degradation in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta?**

During oil production there are a lot of things that goes on and you know that land is a commodity that can not increase, the oil companies continue to depreciate the land every year as long as they dig and if you take this land from this people there will be no alternative for them other than agitation because the land is a means of their livelihood. In most cases when the oil companies write them that they want to employ the youths of oil host communities, it all boils down to how they visualize each other as long as the oil companies take their natural heritage from them. One thing is to make documentation another thing is to follow it faithfully; probably because all the agreement reached between the oil host communities and the oil companies are not adhered to as it were, that is why there is agitation all over the place. If the agreements are adhered to and everybody is satisfied, I don't think this agitation will come up. Whatever activities anyone is doing, there is bound to be interference with the environment and the oil exploration and production is not excluded from such activities as long as they continue to operate because it has its own effects on the environment and the host communities. Finally, if the agreements are not reached, one party will not be satisfied and that is why we have this problem in the Niger Delta.

**INTERVIEW 6: INDIGENE OF OIL HOST COMMUNITY (WRITER ON THE NIGER DELTA CONFLICT / PRINCIPAL OF A COLLEGE IN OGU-BOLO AN OIL PRODUCING COMMUNITY IN RIVERS STATE.**

**Question 1: How would you describe the standard of life in oil producing communities?**

I am a comrade and I have written on the Niger Delta revolutionary struggle on the various tribes seeking justice since 1956 to date. In my book, the Niger Delta revolutionary struggle, we have pointed out particularly some multinational giants such as Chevron, Agip, Mobil, and Shell which is the major stakeholder and a few others that has just come into the main stream. The condition of oil host communities is really bad per say because oil was found in Oloibiri in 1956, today Oloibiri is almost a desert, there are no roads, schools and no means of communication; that is to say, they are not assessable to the out side world. Precisely, after 1956 oil was struck in other communities of the Niger Delta. In Ogoni oil was struck in large quantities in the early 1960s, they too were not feed well because the multinational giants act as people who have this concern with the federal government and are not dealing with the developmental aspect of these communities. The oil companies say they pay tax and therefore the federal should look into the development of these oil producing communities, since we have on-shore and off-shore, the development in the brackish fresh water, saline mangrove forest is even worse because there is where the oil is discovered in commercial quantities. The up stream and down stream activities of these multinational giants have polluted the waters so the eco system is polluted and the environment is also polluted. However, the oil host communities livelihood has been affected because the mangrove swamp which is saline breeds crabs, lobsters and so on. With these environmental hazards, the people of the oil producing communities who lives on these sea animals no longer catch enough for sale because the environment is polluted and the sea animals can not survive in such harsh terrain so their economy is affected, source of drinking water is affected. Like I said before, the federal government and oil companies are just paying lip service to the development of these communities. For instance, after the Willink commission in 1957

which brought out its recommendation in 1958, they brought out the Niger Delta development authority within 1958 and 1960, and Sir Henry Njoku was the first chairman of the board. In 1962, they brought out Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) and this time around, it was for the whole country not the Niger Delta alone so what the Niger Delta people sort for became a national cake. Since then nothing much until 1992 when Oil and Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) was established, these interventionist agencies failed. There were ways both the colonialist and the newly independent nation wanted to assuage the fears of the minority in oil producing communities but in all they were mainly lip service because they did not cushion the effects of the hardship of these communities.

In 1999 during the campaign of former president Obasanjor, he promised the Niger Deltans that he would commission a lasting legacy that will assuage their fears and problems so he initiated the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The NDDC was on parliamentary act but of course two hundred and twenty-five million dollars was the first stake which did not do much, NDDC itself is under funded, it needed more funds injected into it in order to really face the task of improving the rural communities in the Niger Delta. However, improving the living standard of the people through the provision of rural roads, building schools and other basic amenities all these things cannot be met with such little funds. After the creation of NDDC there was still agitation which brought about the Niger Delta Ministry in 2007 which was promised by the present president (Yar'Adua and Jonathan government), the Niger Delta Ministry is on board and its first stake is about four hundred and fifty million Naira, which could not do much to improve the condition of the Niger Delta oil producing communities.

In 1999 as a result of People Democratic Party (PDP) trying to win the election some gangs were armed, which led to the causes of militancy, culticism and violence in the Niger Delta; some groups were armed and these groups metamorphosed into what we now have as militancy. The present militancy have done so much harm to both the communities and the oil sector, a barrel of oil stumbles up and down in price, up to hundred and twenty dollars per barrel which is the major cause of energy crisis globally.

**Question 2: Are there issues of environmental degradation such as gas flaring / pipe line explosion associated with oil producing communities?**

In 1993, the Ogoni issue is a very good example; the Ogoni's are one of the major stakeholders in the Niger Delta who produce about twenty to twenty-five percent of oil in Rivers State. Late Kenule Saro-wiwa as an environmental activist earlier saw the degradation of the Ogoni eco system and environment; he raised alarm because Shell was the major multinational in Ogoni land. The Ogoni's discovered that they could not produce much food as it use to before oil was discovered in Ogoni land, he saw that the water was polluted, they could not catch much fish and they started experiencing air borne diseases because the environment was very polluted. If we are talking about environmental degradation, the rate is almost eighty to ninety percent degradation in the Niger Delta particularly in Ogoni land which was a case study per say and the Ogoni's did not always stop Shell from production. When they raised alarm in the 1993 world cup when Nigeria was playing against Italy, Ken Saro-wiwa shared flyers at the International field indicating red card for Shell and that was the first instance where Nigerians got alarmed, which led to his final execution on charges of killing five Ogonis. The case of Ken Saro-wiwa is a good example of the environmental degradation of the Niger Delta.

**Question 3: In what ways do the indigenes of oil host communities make their voices heard in the event of environmental degradation and provision of basic amenities in oil host communities?**

Like I said, since 1957 the Niger Delta people have been raising alarm on how their environment have been polluted and depreciated by oil companies. There was the Rio conference in 1992, which was the greatest summit in which the Niger Delta people's voice was heard. It resulted into the federal, state and local government signing the new Environmental Impact Assessment, prior to this time, there was nothing like that until the Rio conference of 1992; so the Niger Delta people have raised enough alarm to tell the world that their environment is being polluted, degraded and endanger the species there in.

**Question 4: How will you describe the directions of conflict in the Niger Delta on environmental degradation and resource control in the Niger Delta?**

In 1957 the chiefs and people of the River State went to London and placed before her Majesty and the British parliament the problems of environmental degradation, the effects of oil exploration and exploitation, which I said is about the Henry Willinks commission. In 1966 late major Isaac Adakaboro also raised alarm on the effects of oil production, exploration and exploitation. He launched a twelve day revolution to show the world the effects of environmental pollution and how it can lead to earth quakes and the submerging of the earth surface and other hazards, however, his twelve day revolution was defected by the federal government. There after the civil war, it did not end there, after Isaac came Ken Saro-wiwa in 1992 who was hanged in 1995, Ken brought to the world's knowledge the effects and hazards of oil exploration and exploitation. It is not as if the Niger Delta people folded their hands while these things were going on, they did not. They have been able to show the world that the effects of these things could be everlasting; at present people like Asari Dokubo the new militants fighting to make the world aware of the oil exploration and exploitation activities and how it endangers this part of the world, at a time oil will stop and the effects will be devastating to the Niger Delta people.

**Question 5: At present, are there any mechanism put in place by the government to end the Niger Delta conflict?**

In the days of former present Obasanjo (1999-2007), he some time called Alhaji Asari Dokubo the leader of the new militancy and he also called Ateke Tom who is the head of the Niger Delta vigilante in Rivers State; others from Delta State like Tom Polo, Sobama George and the emergent new leaders of some of these groups then were not called. As we are talking now the present government of Alhaji Yar'Adua has embarked on an amnesty which some people and critics say it's porous because granting an amnesty to a group of people. There should be a factor where the government is finally going to look into the root of why these people came up in the first instance, unfortunately, these issues

have not been looked into, but as a blanket amnesty for the militants presently, some militants have agreed to heed. MEND which is a coalition of militant groups in the Niger Delta is still carrying out the peace operation because they say the blanket amnesty is just like the former amnesty that was embarked upon by the previous government and that is also going to fail. Federal government has come up with some ways to assuage the Niger Delta militancy but these things do not really have home and feet so to say.

**Question 6: In what ways do you think the creation of Niger Delta ministry alongside the operation of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) will end the conflict in the Niger Delta?**

Like I said earlier these two bodies, the NDDC and currently the Niger Delta ministry are just ways used by the new colonialist headed by the Hausa, Fulani's, Igbos and the Yoruba (four major tribes in Nigeria) to still gimmick the oil producing minorities because the states here are small, the problems of the Niger Delta are enormous. The Niger Delta ministry took off with four hundred and fifty million Naira and the NDDC started off with two hundred and forty million dollars, what are we talking about because it is on record that the Warri – Port Harcourt express road (the major road linking the Niger Delta states) takes the first budget of the Niger Delta ministry. Look at the brackish saline mangrove communities that are almost dead from the devastation of oil production, exploitation and exploration, therefore such interventionist agencies are not going to solve the problems of the oil producing communities rather, at best, they can aggravate because they will just be a small chunk in a deep sea because the problems are more than what these interventionist agency can handle. What we need here is resource control and true federalism, rather than these communities having small chunks but instead these communities will pay royalty to the federal government and the prospecting communities will pay tax as it is done in the United States of America.

**Question 7: Was there any time in the Niger Delta oil producing communities suffered as a result of government military operation with militants?**

There are many instances; we have the Umuechem community in Rivers State completely destroyed and the King, elders, women, men and children killed at close range. We also have the Odi community in Bayelsa State devastated as a result of some militants killing about twelve military personnel during the Obasanjo regime, air, land and sea arm forces were sent and Odi was completely destroyed. We also have Odioma community which was destroyed as a result of protest to better the loss of the community as a result of pipe lines passing through and flow station in this community. It is worth bearing in mind that along side Shell, Chevron, Agip, Mobil and others; these oil companies have been involved in what is classified as divide and rule system. What the oil companies do when people protest, they align with the federal forces, including the federal government, go there mount stands and destroy these communities. Where bribe and such things could not assuage the people they use this arrant force.

There is what we can call intra-communal clashes, which are, per say sponsored by the ruling government. A good example is Okuruama community where the forces of Ateke Tom in connection with former governor of Rivers State, Peter Odili (1999-2007) completely destroyed the community, so we have many communities that have shared the same fate and presently we have six communities like that in Delta State. When the government force went to destroy camp five of Tom Polo, in doing this an old woman of over ninety-five years was killed and a good number of people who could not escape from the air, land and sea forces, nearly twenty-seven communities were destroyed. This issue we raised in a conference at Abuja in early may 2009, where the president came out with a statement to stop the offensive but in June the same year the federal government was still destroying communities. Government forces attacked Abonima in June this year (2009), where Abonima was attacked in pretence of removing militants. Many communities have been affected through this type of devastation by the federal might, using the tax payer's money to purchase arms to destroy the oil producing communities.

**Question 8: Do you think the media has done enough reporting and coverage of the Niger Delta conflict?**

Well, prior to this time, since 1999 we could say the local tabloids owned by private individuals in the Niger Delta have done well but the national newspapers or newspapers owned by the executive directors from the major tribes have not been covering the Niger Delta properly until recently because they thought that the Niger Delta people wanted to show the rest of Nigeria they own the oil and therefore it is significant to their progress. Today we have so many local tabloids that have been doing well to cover the activities of the oil producing companies and the devastation they bring to the oil producing communities, the militants being revolutionary fighters or genuine fighters because between them we have people who have genuine intentions to better the loss of the Niger Delta oil producing communities, in as much as we have the criminals among them; who embark on kidnapping and other such activities in order to amass wealth.

**Question 9: Who engages more in developmental projects in the Niger Delta?**

We have three types of government, the federal, state and local government. All along the federal government has been saying they are giving allocations to the state government and they should develop their state, been that as it were, the various past governments have lived on what one could call defrauding the populace by not properly utilizing these federal allocations to the state; some previous democratic governors 1999-2007 have been accused in the Niger Delta states. The six core states in the Niger Delta, namely; Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross Rivers and Akwa-Ibon, all their governments have been accused of embezzlement, defrauding the people's monthly revenue allocations. Therefore, it is true to say that the Niger Delta states were not doing well before these interventionist agencies like the NDDC and presently the Niger Delta ministry were set up. The local governments are just jamborees like one will call them, the allocations come and they just share within themselves, they have not been playing vital role in their communities despite the enormous allocation. There is what the federal government call federal projects, these projects are not brought to the Niger Delta rather they are mostly



taken to the northern part of Nigeria because of leadership since the Niger Delta people can not hold positions of presidency and few ministerial positions.

**Question 10: What are your views on the Niger Delta conflict?**

My views on the Niger Delta conflict, is that the federal government should come out with a more human face by agreeing to the terms of the Niger Delta people, like I said earlier, resource control and true federalism. The resource control, the communities who own this oil will embark on the production and pay royalties to the government and in true federalism, like you know in the United States of America, there must be a round table conference in which the various nationalities are going to speak about how they want to live in a nation that they believe is called Nigeria. The minorities must have a voice, they must be assuaged of their fears and presently nothing like this is in operation because the constitutions we have had, apart from the 1960 independence constitution, all other constitutions have been panel beaten by dictatorship. The 1999 constitution which we are talking today does not give room to the progress of the Niger Delta minorities who produce this oil, until these constitutions are amended where the people really sit down and discuss and place before Nigerians how they want to live, what they really need and what is obtainable, until these things are done we will never have a true federalism.

**INTERVIEW 7: ELDER STATES MAN / POLITICIAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITISTS FROM OZORO AN OIL PRODUCING COMMUNITY IN DELTA STATE**

**Question 1: As one of the early pioneers to stage protest over environmental degradation by oil multinationals in your community, what instigated you to take such action?**

The discovery of oil in our land was originally conceived to be a blessing to the entire area especially Delta State. When you look at the report of Willink Commission in the early days especially during the colonial administration, it was clear that the places called

Niger Delta were peculiar places and so they defined the geographical areas into these states: Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa-Ibon and Cross rivers. These areas originally were not conceived to have oil; it was regarded as a geographical location of the nation. The region's political leader made by inter-areas, who was the leader of opposition those years, happened to come from Delta State and he said being a peculiar area, they must be addressed properly. Before, they were regarding places like Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibon and Cross Rivers as eastern Nigeria, then Delta and Edo were regarded as western Nigeria. But because of the peculiar environment of these areas, regarding us as major fish supplier to the nation and it was a peculiar geographical environment, quite distinct from the rest of Nigeria and for the region to develop there must be proper attention of the federal government being focused on it and that led to what we called Niger Development Cooperation and its aim and objectives was to focus on these areas but it did not work.

Then in 1957 oil was discovered in Oloibiri in present day Bayelsa State, later oil was discovered in all the oil producing communities in Delta State and Shell with other multinationals started looking for oil. The people in the oil producing communities opened their minds that it was going to be reciprocal as the oil companies are coming to take their oil they will in turn do something to prosper or better the life of the people but the contrary became the case. When the oil companies came up, their concern was to make wealth and take this wealth to other areas; in terms of employment, they will bring people from Britain, and other major tribes in Nigeria and the indigenes of the oil producing communities were not given attention, the only jobs they gave to the indigenes were low quality jobs like cleaners, messengers, clerical officers, chef but people who came from the major areas of Nigeria took the opportunity of important positions and started dictating for the people of oil producing communities. When there are vacant positions they will go home and bring their people to take the jobs so our people were being treated as slaves. In order not to better the people's condition, the oil companies after exploration will leave the effect of the devastation like oil pollution, gas flaring every where with no attention given to it, so we found the situation to be odd and intolerable. Hence, I led a group that the company should stop operation until they are

able to provide for the people, give them recognition, develop the area and that led to our decision that you (the researcher) is now referring to, we have not abandoned our struggle; it is a continuous exercise even in this present dispensation.

Before oil was discovered, what was sustaining the country economically was money from groundnut and cocoa; the revenue allocation at that time to the areas producing these items was fifty percent of the total production but when oil was discovered here in the Niger Delta because they are majority tribes, they removed it completely and that was when the trouble started. First and foremost, the revenue allocation to oil producing communities became two percent, so we challenged them; it went from two percent to three percent, then five percent and later thirteen percent so it keeps going up any time there is trouble. The major tribes have seen oil to be the major source of income for Nigeria, they abandoned the production of groundnut, cocoa and other agricultural products that were flourishing in the north, west and east because oil is there and they started planting their people in the circle of government. We felt that until the issue is addressed and the oil producing communities enjoy the equal opportunity as they did, when cocoa and groundnut were in circulation and let the benefit of the people who own the oil be pronounced. As a matter of fact we call Nigeria a one country, a country of democracy, a country classified as federal government, is that how federal system is being practiced overseas? The Nigerian government now created an artificial federal system of government that says what I have I should not enjoy, they who are strangers will come and take over what the Niger Delta people are suppose to enjoy and take it overseas and other states. What is practiced in Nigeria is not a federal system of government, it is a unitary government because no autonomy given to the state and local government to exercise its own system. What is there is that after collecting the revenue from oil sales they go to Abuja the capital of Nigeria located in the middle belt, before it was Lagos in the west and share the money in such a way that part of it even will be not disclosed and we see revelation about all this things even up till date, they are sharing the money, part of it is excess crude reserve, it is not suppose to be so. What we are asking for is our fair share, we allow the federal government to say one Nigeria but let it be put into practice, it is a federal system of government so let the Nigerian government do what

federal system dictates in other countries. It cannot be peculiar to Nigeria alone that when you talk of federalism they are practicing unitary system of government, it will not work, not until the issue of equity, fairness and justice is addressed, the agitation will continue.

**Question 2: How would you rate the operational and environmental standard of oil multinationals in the Niger Delta?**

They are only here to take away oil, they don't care about the damages they are causing to oil producing communities, if you go to different areas of these oil host communities, you will see gas flaring, oil spillage and toxins being buried. The most recent (2009) is in Ndokwa local government area in Delta state even at Ozoro here in Delta state they buried toxins, the report is there, the oil companies are trying to hide it but they can't because lawyers have gone into the case, scientist have also gone to the location and confirm that they buried toxin, so they are not looking for anything other than to take away the oil and leave the people with nothing. They are not doing anything to bring good and conducive environment to the people rather they are always polluting the environment and that is one of the reasons why people will continue act.

**Question 3: In the event of environmental degradation who comes to the aid of the community and how quick?**

It is the authority, the federal government of Nigeria because the companies come in as employees, they negotiate with them and enter into drinking sort of agreement before they start operation and if the government heed to what ever they tell them and neglect it's people, it is left for that government to do whatever is appropriate. If they want the people to die unnecessarily and the oil taken away and the people remain in their poor state it is left for the government. The federal government of Nigeria is solely responsible for taking care of its own people and the environment. The laws concerning oil, they put a lot of them in place like the land use decree act, is a law to make the federal government to be in total control of land to the detriment of the people who are in the

environment; and you have gas laws, oil laws, none of these laws is to better the life of the people.

**Question 4: Considering oil sales accounts for about ninety to ninety-five percent of Nigeria revenue, how would you rate the standard of life in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta?**

Indirectly, I have said that the revenue gotten from oil is going to the federal government pocket, it is not being given to the oil producing communities. For instance, like Abuja the federal capital territory, sharing revenue allocation, one percent of the total revenue because they made it federal capital and the whole of Niger Delta you can not give them even half the percent of the revenue. Recently, the federal government created what they called the Niger Delta ministry, they say it is a fact, but it is a deceit and where did they put the head quarters, at Abuja. I said why did they put the ministry in Niger Delta and put a liaison officer at Abuja, so if the head quarter is at Abuja and I want to see the minister or any higher officer, it means that I will have to pay transport to Abuja and pay for a hotel and also take feeding allowance. Why is the head office not in the Niger Delta region? every action of the federal government is punitive, nothing to the interest of the people; the Minister of state came here two days ago, I asked him and he said master that statement you made last time is true, when you came out to say openly that the ministry of Niger Delta should not be at Abuja that it should come to the Niger Delta, the federal government have now considered it and they are making preparation to move it to the Niger Delta and that is the condition. If they come nearer here and they want us to reason, we will rub our minds and see what they can do but I doubt it.

What we call confederation, until Nigeria becomes a confederation or a federal system of government whereby what you produce in your place is for you but then pay tax to the federal government. It is only tax they should take and not the bulk of the money coming in and then sharing it here and there. No matter what they do, I have told them at Warri in Delta State that the military might federal government puts in the Niger Delta to suppress the militants will not work, unless they wipe out the whole race, the people will emerge

again, no matter the settlement or how far you suppress them the people will come out until the government justifies them.

**Question 5: What are the implications of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta using your community as a reference point?**

It is poverty, absolute poverty because people have no land to farm, no water to fish, anywhere to run to; rather they become beggars roaming about and no employment. If you stay at my place for about five to six days, you will see many people coming here to beg for alms. I make sacrifice, sacrifice to those that I can, but can I keep giving them money, so even if you say there is a blow up, is it not because of some of us telling them this suffering will be over? there will be a general blow up and its going to be the whole of Niger Delta, the government is now trying to suppress Gbaramatu and other communities, it is not so, there will be a blow up unless urgent action is taken to redress the Niger Delta situation.

**Question 6: How often and in what capacity do your community and other oil producing communities experience environmental degradation by oil companies?**

Every time, every time when they are doing exploration, if you go to some places, you will see the effect of oil production, you will not find any domestic animal again, all fish ponds are polluted including the rivers. The Ijaws and Itsekiris were the major areas producing fish for the Niger Delta; they are now living on ice fish imported from Poland and other countries, which I consider to be rubbish. People are dying and nobody knows the type of disease that are affecting them, the man who wakes healthy this morning before night falls you hear he is dead, no good medical facilities being put in place. We are living in a very dangerous environment, what I will call predicament, which the government really needs to take seriously, very serious predicament; we don't know where we are in this country, we don't know. Oil production is a curse and not a blessing to the people of the Niger Delta rather it is a set back to the life of the people.

**Question 7: Have your community at any time experience conflict between indigenes and community leaders over oil funds from government or oil multinationals?**

When there is money for people who live in poverty to share, there must be problems because you have the lion share and the other have the rat share it becomes a problem; but that is not the issue. The issue is if you satisfy the people and bring something for the people to share and there is a master plan or the people see the money on ground, they will know how to share it. The question of saying that there are some prominent leaders taking the money and don't give it to the youths, it is deceit; they just want to cause division among the people. Why can't the oil companies convert the money into other aspects of development? If you know that if you give money to the people they will not make good use of it, then convert the money or use it to do other things so the people can benefit from it? As they are getting this money from oil, why can't they put infrastructure in place so that people can work, why can't they provide agricultural farms all over the place, why do they not have fishery establishments all over for this people to fish? The money they give to the people is peanuts; they are giving peanuts only to scatter the people, the money is peanuts, they are not making available funds necessary for the well being of the people. I have told you before about this revenue allocation, lets assume its five hundred billion Naira the government gets from oil sales, they give oil producing communities twenty billion Naira and the rest distributed to Abuja and to other states that are not oil producing and that is exactly what is happening. How much can the government say they have spent on infrastructures in Ozoro, Gbaramatu or other oil producing communities? Why can't the government say these are the billions we have spent in these areas? these are the infrastructures and projects we have put in place in the oil producing communities, let the government publish them and look at the cost of all these projects together, they cannot be more than ten or twenty million Naira and they are talking of projects, so they are trying to incite the people in the oil producing communities.

The king of Okpe kingdom came out when we where holding a meeting at government house Asaba, the capital of Delta State, to say that the government promised to bring

electricity, gas and other infrastructural development to his kingdom through oil companies, he refused and said he does not want Shell, Agip and other oil companies because they have oppressed them to the extent that we cannot allow any of them to enter into our land and that was what the King of Okpe said in presence of other traditional rulers and others prominent people. The issue is this, the government is not been truthful and when the Isoko oil well was closed down, within a week they said we have lost one hundred and twenty-eight billion Naira. It is when they loose you hear the amount of money they are losing, but when they get, you will never hear the money they are receiving, who are they deceiving? They are deceiving themselves, their trouble will continue until they change.

**Question 8: Considering the enormity of the Niger Delta conflict, how would you rate government performance to end the Niger Delta conflict?**

The government can end Niger Delta conflict; first, get a proper description of what they call Niger Delta, if you are talking of oil producing states or areas, it is only on that, you can pass your judgment. Niger Delta is suppose to be the following states, Edo state is not part of Niger Delta but because during the agitation Edo and Delta was called defunct Bendel State and at Galegale and Oronigbe they discovered oil there, but being that we were in the same state (defunct Bendel state) we can now accommodate them as part of Niger Delta but Edo definitely by Willink commission of inquiry did not include Edo state as part of the Niger Delta. Niger Delta is composed of the following states: Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross Rivers and Akwa-Ibom. Abia state does not belong to the Niger Delta but if you are talking of oil producing communities, it is there you can have Edo, Ondo, Abia, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Imo state. Oil producing state is quit different from actual Niger Delta, in order to bring the major tribes to enjoy the oil production; they now formulated what is called the Niger Delta and added Abia, Imo, Edo and Ondo. This is an embodiment of the confusion they created in other that the major tribes will benefit so that the majority tribes will continue to support the Hausa tribe in the north; this is another problem they have created. There are various commission of inquiries they made like the Willink commission of inquires, then the



report of general Ogomudia, the present report committee set up and headed by Mitie amplified this differences and they said call Niger Delta proper as it is embedded in Willink report inquiry and not bring other areas and add it to the Niger Delta. We are not helped by that composition. Until the laws and their stipulations to committee reports are put together properly and implement them, there could be no peace.

**Question 9: In the event of environmental degradation, in what ways are the indigenes compensated?**

The indigenes are not adequately compensated, what the oil companies do, is to look for some strategic people and they normally make them contractors and instruct them to carry out functions, all these things are personal. People can really say oil companies are doing much when they put infrastructure in place like good schools, hospitals, fisheries, industries, agricultural farms and technical know how in places and that is what people will say they are benefiting. When the oil companies give peanuts to a traditional ruler and tomorrow when there is trouble, they will say they gave money for the people to the traditional rulers and he has eaten it in order to blackmail him and cause confusion in his own domain. That is not what the people require; the people want proper developmental projects to be sited in their area, the young ones to be employed and in the management positions, their sons and daughters should take control of this oil sector and not to bring other tribes to take control but let indigenes mount this resources or be at the head of this resources, it is there you know the tricks they are playing because they will not allow it.

**Question 10: How would you rate the level of transparency the oil companies and community leaders exhibit when dealing with the indigenes in your community?**

I do not see them, but when they come they look for traditional rulers and some little chiefs, and whatever they do is behind closed doors. When you came into my compound did you not see the gates wide open? because God is my security. The traditional ruler takes what they want and close their gates and the companies instruct them to tell their people we have done this, were as what they have done is to either the traditional rulers

or their small chiefs and it does not get to the people. We are not looking for peanuts, what we want is for the oil companies to say we are visiting an oil producing community today and let the leadership and people of the community be there and say this is the package we have for you and let the people discuss with the oil company. It is the people that will set up a committee to discuss with the company and not individuals because they hold positions, therefore they are representing the people entirely, it is wrong. Let the oil companies make themselves available to the people but they do not do it, instead they try to tarnish the image of whoever is there as much as possible. Myself, when I got my trouble with the oil companies in the early 1970s, I closed down the flow station in my community; do you know what the oil companies did? They arrested me, and after my release and I said what was the point, the oil company said they want to settle me, and I said myself, they said yes and I said alright you can settle me, then they carried me to police headquarter in Benin, Edo state (defunct Bendel State) where I met with their boss and other member and they asked if they have done anything for me, they said no, so we came back, and you know what they did, they brought documents to make me a contractor and I said this is not what I am fighting for, what I am fighting for is massive development of my area, I will not take anything from you. Since then, Shell does not call me, they ran away because they found me to be a difficult man but let me call Isoko people today, and say this is what we have, Isoko people will follow me because the oil companies have tested me and the my people (Isoko people) know they can't win me over. If the leaders were to be like myself, these oil companies would have stopped their nonsense, they do not bring out what they have for the people to enjoy. It is developmental projects that we want, put our children to head the oil companies, reduce the unemployment and if you want to pay anything to the people, pay it publicly to them for all to see and don't hide it.

**Question 11: As an elder statesman, what is the way forward as regards the Niger Delta conflict?**

The way forward is this; the federal government should be involved particularly in all negotiation, not to say because these boys came out and they are militants, where as I do

not call them militants, I call them freedom fighters because they have been in prison for a long time, they want to free themselves out of the situation. The federal government should have a bearing in oil producing communities, particularly the areas where oil is been produced. For example, in the United States, I was in the US about two months ago (May, 09) and while in US I was flying from place to place for two weeks to see things for myself, the effects of oil, you will never find, I met some people in oil producing communities that say their government tell the oil companies to produce the same number they recommend.

The oil producing communities will put their demands on the table, the federal committee will put their demands on the table and those overseas will be the mediators so that we can see what is obtainable in their place to avoid crisis. Without doing this, the government is wasting their time because God did not make us as their sacrificial lamb for their own intrigues, the battle will continue even if we die today our children will continue and it will not stop. Unless we form a committee of other nationals using their laws to see how they distribute oil wealth to different areas in their countries, it will not work; these nationals have to be present here or else if our government have to send representatives from Nigeria they will send people from other tribes and when they return they will twist the law. If you go to UC in US everything is in order, they pay tax to the federal government; there was a town we went to after Los Angelis, it took me four hours by road, when I got there, I met a man who took me to his house and showed me a meter recording his oil usage, and he said to me that the oil belongs to him and that is his blessing, he only pays tax to federal government depending on the usage. There must be a proper committee in Nigeria and then invite other producing oil countries to come and produce the laws they operate with to set a standard here, for without that, there will be no peace.

**INTERVIEW 8: OPPOSITION COMMUNITY LEADER AGAINST CORRUPTION BY OTHER COMMUNITY LEADERS IN OWEVWE AN OIL PRODUCING COMMUNITY IN DELTA STATE**

**Question 1: In what ways do the indigenes of your community relate the developmental needs of the community to the oil multinationals operating in your community?**

The main oil company operating in my community is Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). As it is, the way we relate with the oil companies, we ask for some kind of assistance in terms of development for the community. The community has a set of committee, which is called the community leaders and the committee executive is made up of president general and other members of the executive from the community. These are the people who relate with SPDC to tell them their developmental needs like in the areas of roads, human capital development, the welfare of the elders of the communities and then, of course, what can be done to cushion the effect of the oil exploration and expectation in the community.

**Question 2: In response to the developmental needs of the community, in what ways does these oil multinationals get back to the indigenes of your community?**

Well after making the request, sometimes they have meetings in form of a forum of the representatives of the oil community and the officials of the multinationals and what they can do, they tell the executive of the community, led by the president general of the community.

**Question 3: Considering the operations of oil multinationals in your community, how would you rate the environmental standard?**

The environmental standard is poor because, there is this gas flaring which has flared up the whole place, then you have oil pollution which is not adequately taken care of; the oil companies are not doing much about the environmental issues in the community.

**Question 4: In the event of environmental degradation, who comes to the aid of the community and how quick?**

First, the community cries to the government, to make their plight known and secondly to the oil companies, in most cases the pressure is on the oil company to effect the set of measures to be able to compensate for the degradation. It is mainly the oil companies that take care of the devastation. In most cases environmental degradation which affects the aquatic life of the place, if it is not quickly and adequately done, they put the community in economic embarrassment. Even though the rescue may not be as fast as one will want but at least immediately any devastation is known they send their experts to where it is happening and they try to take measures to correct the abnormal situation.

**Question 5: Is your community currently experiencing any form of conflict between indigenes, community leaders and oil multinationals?**

The answer is yes. First, we talk of indigenes in the community versus the community leaders and second, the community versus the oil companies. There have been series of protest against SPDC to bring in some development especially with the rig they are presently establishing in the community. The rig, the gas plant and of course, the laid oil pipes and you know the community has about twenty-one oil wells and if you get there the rigs are nothing to write home about and this is where they reap billions of dollars annually but the SPDC will not do anything about it and so that is why this protest is always there. Although, not to the extent of militancy like it is in the other part of the Niger Delta.

**Question 6: Considering oil sales accounts for ninety percent of Nigeria revenue, how would you rate the quality of life in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta using your community as a reference point?**

Well, may be since you came to Nigeria to conduct this research, you must have actually gotten into the oil producing communities and I know that you must have gone there and you must have seen things for yourself, there is nothing to write home about when it comes to the standard of life and development in the oil producing communities. These are people who still live in trash houses; in fact poverty level is at its peak in these areas, it is just a place they get the wealth and take to other places to develop and that is the theme and pain of the oil communities because development here is at its lowest level. In fact there is no development let me say so, would you say that there is development? When people can not eat two square meals a day, when the road to these oil producing communities are usually flooded and cars can't move on the roads, lack of industries and of course no electricity, the electricity in these areas can hardly function, lets say two hours a day. In fact there is nothing in the Niger Delta especially in the oil producing communities.

**Question 7: Who engages more in developmental projects in your community?**

We have public spirited people who do that, then of course government, lets say government mainly because the schools in my community, like the primary and secondary are established, announced and funded by the government. There is no presence of oil companies in all these; the only thing you can think of in the community is just a cottage hospital and nothing more and of course the roads, even as the roads are at present, it is government we cry to, NDDC that is actually suppose to be in charge of this issue have been paying lip service to the community, they put it in the budget that they will publish for tender but nothing has been down. In the area of assistance in agriculture, nothing is being done so the people have to care for themselves.

**Question 8: How would you rate the level of transparency the oil companies and community representatives exhibit when dealing with the indigenes in your community and the rest of the Niger Delta?**

Fraudulent; fraudulent because the executives from the oil companies also connive with the representatives of the oil communities to short change the community. Even though we are saying that no development there, we cannot also exonerate the community leaders from the pressure of what is happening, well everything also boils down on poverty. With, may be some two million Naira bribe here and there in the hands of the community leaders the oil companies can go and rest and that is what is happening. When we talk of transparency, it is zero on the part of the oil company's representatives and their liaison officers and the leaders of the community, there is no transparency. If they are given money to develop the community, they embezzle the money, the development will not be there and it has been so all along. There are fake contracts given to the leaders that are never carried out but they are paid so that is the situation in my community.

**Question 9: What are your views on the operations of oil companies, government, community leaders and the media as regards the Niger Delta conflict?**

Well, talking about the media, the media is fine, whether you call it print or electronic media because they actually bring out the problems of the communities except the ones that are gagged by government. Then when you talk of rating the oil companies in oil producing communities, their business there is to make money and when they find out that the community is not hostile like what we have in other Niger Delta region, for example, the typical Ijaw land, they continue to express the situation and pay less attention or pay no attention to the community development. The leaders, like I have told you, if I want to rate them, I will rate them very low because most of the things happening there, if the leaders are not compromising the oil companies will do much more than what they are doing or they will have taken giant steps to ensure the development of the area but this is not the case. When you talk of government, you know this country is political, if you have a political big weight or political juggernauts in

government from a community, then the community will have what they want from government in terms of infrastructure, social or welfare needs of the community but in a community like mine, where we don't have such political big weights, the government presence have not gone beyond the schools, no roads and other basic amenities. Government effort in the area too is next to zero and these are my views of oil exploration by multinationals, the community leaders, media and the government in my community.

### **INTERVIEW 9: GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE ON INTER-ETHNIC MATTERS IN DELTA STATE**

**Question 1: Are there inter-ethnic conflict in oil producing communities in Niger Delta?**

The answer is yes and no; yes because we have had to experience some inter-ethnic conflicts particularly in Delta State within the Niger Delta. We can not readily say that those inter-ethnic conflicts were directly linked to oil exploration; they were underlined in primordial sentiments of which with some political decisions had to spark off. But again, within the Niger Delta region we can say where there are boundary issues between communities where there are oil wells; yes, they have had cause to experience such crisis?

**Question 2: Considering the enormity of the Niger Delta conflict, what are the mechanisms government has set in place towards conflict resolution?**

Well, I can state specifically for Delta State, starting from the previous administration (1999-2007) in response to what the crisis was during that time, government had to set up a ministry specifically for conflict resolution and that ministry was headed by a commissioner in charge of inter-ethnic relations and conflict resolution. That ministry worked hard to bring about peaceful resolution of the crisis that have engulfed Delta State and also disarmament of the restive youths in the various communities as at that time.



Since then the tempo of peace building has been set up, even now as we speak the current government has built more on the peace structure; we have the ministry of security and peace development in Delta State, supervised directly by the government himself, who is assisted by the various agencies such as the water ways security committee which is in charge that peace is maintained along the water ways within Delta State. We also have other offices to meet the special needs of the governor such as the office of the special adviser in charge of oil and gas who engages companies involved in hosting oil installations and also engages the companies that are involved in oil explorations. We also have the office of the senior social assistant to the governor on community affairs, the office of the senior social assistant to the government in youth development, all charged with the responsibility of ensuring that there is harmony between various communities, among members of the same communities and the troop of militants coming in; so I will say so far so good. The government have tried to ensure that the escalation is contained, that is why we have what the government has established to bring peace.

At the federal level, you are aware that the federal government has established the ministry of the Niger Delta in addition to Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) which has been an interventionist agency to ensure the development of the Niger Delta region. Well, so far I think the people in government are doing their best even though they can do more and a few weeks ago the president of the federal republic of Nigeria granted amnesty to militants as a way to reduce the tension in the Niger Delta region. There are enough structures and institutions in place to manage the Niger Delta conflict.

**Question 3: How quick and in what ways does the government respond to the plights of indigenes in oil producing communities as a result of environmental degradation?**

As for environmental degradation there are laws, statutory provisions, in fact one of the laws created an agency known as Nostra, which is empowered to be the interventionist

agency when ever there is any oil spillage or any happening that affects the environment. There role is to enforce environmental laws, sometimes when we talk of environmental degradation, it is caused by third party intervention, it may not be due to technical failure of negligence of the company but because of this going agitation sometimes or by some unscrupulous elements that temper with flow lines, even at that, the law made adequate provision to remedy such situations. When there is no third party intervention, the oil companies takes full responsibility for, first, cleaning up, remedy the environment and pay compensation to the affected communities. We have had cause to intervene and ensure that such affected communities are adequately compensated, we have had to negotiate compensation plans and packages for all such communities that has adversely been affected. On the other hand, where the spill is due to third party intervention, of course the law provides that no compensation will be paid; there is a procedure that when ever there is any spill, there is a team made up of federal and state government officials, the oil companies and the communities. It is that team that goes to ascertain the cause of the spill, they will decide if it was due to equipment failure, negligence on the part of the company or it was due to third party intervention and when that happens it is the responsibility of the oil company which is limited to first, clean up the mess and remedy the environment.

**Question 4: Considering both peaceful and violent agitation in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta, what are their demands? And in what ways does the government respond to their demands?**

Of course, if I may take you down memory lane, the call for agitation for development did not just start today, it dates back to the 1960s, when Isaac Adakaboro striked, that was violence, this was followed by the peaceful movement in Ogoni land led by late Ken Saro-wiwa and today we have genuine agitation from concerned Niger Deltans but the truth is the place (Niger Delta) remains under developed. There are other elements who have seized the opportunity of agitation to perpetrate criminal activities against the people so of course, government has had to respond in various ways. The response of government started from 1.5 percent oil derivation then went to three percent and now we

have thirteen percent derivation from oil sales, even though the current agitation is that it is rather too low because we operate a federation and in a federation we are suppose to operate true federalism. It does not have to be within politics so that is a genuine agitation so of course criminals take undue advantage of this crisis from this realm on the innocent citizens, no government will just close their eyes to this things like abduction of oil workers, vandalisation of oil equipment, of course the appropriate government security agencies will have to react in order to secure life and properties.

**Question 5: In regards to inter-ethnic conflict and the Niger-Delta agitation in what ways have the federal government amnesty been effective, using Delta State as a reference point?**

The amnesty is just starting, it may be too early for us to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of the amnesty. We are to lead the plan because his Excellency the governor of Delta State has taken the leadership of the crusade for the success of the amnesty. Only a few weeks ago there were stakeholders in the governors' office, where the governor, the panel established by the federal government for the purpose of amnesty, all of us gathered and we brain stormed on the issue. We are believing that at the end of the day the amnesty is going to take off because the implication is this, if you have a genuine agitation come let us talk and we hear you out even if you have committed any crime over this years, forget about the crime, nothing is going to happen to you but it doesn't have to be open ended. There must have to be a limit so if at the end of this period of amnesty any of the genuine agitators fails to take advantage of this opportunity and at the end adhere to carry out any criminal activities, then of course, the obvious conclusion is that your guess will be as good as mine.

**Question 6: Have the government at any time amplify or downplay information on military operation in the event of inter-ethnic clashes and agitation in the Niger Delta?**

I don't think so because information gathering and dissemination actually should not be the exclusive business of government. The press has that responsibility resting on their shoulders because it is not even the government that should, it may be borrowed a bit from the civilized world that they should really disseminate information. However, government have had the course to address the nation on a number of occasion even the recent crisis at Gbaramatu kingdom there have been regular press briefings by government officials and also sometimes from the militants; so I would say the answer to your question is yes to a very large extent, but when you now juxtapose that with what the Nigerian press have been reporting, we will say yes, because we have the pipeline press and the press is the return of civilian regime. The press has done so well to ensure the maintenance of democratic tenure.

**Question 7: What is government commitment to peace and security in the Niger Delta?**

Of course, without peace there can be no development, the primary responsibility of government is to maintain law and order, and law and order can not be separated from peace and security so the government commitment is irrevocable. The government is committed to peace.

**Question 8: What are your views on inter-ethnic clashes and the Niger Delta conflict?**

Inter-ethnic clashes are clashes or conflicts that are neither good nor bad, when we experience conflicts, the problems comes when that conflict is not well managed because conflict simply means somebody wants to execute what has been going on in the mind. Conflict if well managed can even lead to innovation, creativity, friendship; it is only

when it is not well managed that it generates to crisis. My views are that they are inevitable because no community or nation is an island of its own even the stronger nations depends on the weaker ones to survive, so in the process of that interaction there are bound to be conflicts. Like I have earlier said, the problems arises when such conflicts are not well managed because what does conflict situation really demands, they demand that people come together and negotiate, but when ever they are coming to negotiate, if the agitation is bottled up, of course the obvious consequences is explosion and it can be damaging. My views are that the inter-ethnic conflicts have been there, some are well managed and peace returned, for example, three tribes in Delta State the Uhrobos, Ijaws and itsekiris were engaged in inter-ethnic wars for sometime but because of the way that crisis was managed these tribes came together as friends. The man who have been feeling deprived will not know the other person has the same feeling and those who thought they were dominating, will also not know they have been dominating some other persons because man by nature is selfish so there have to be a platform where all the interest are allocated and satisfied if not but to a large extent. My view on the Niger Delta conflict is that so far so good.

#### **INTERVIEW 10: PROFESSOR MANAGEMENT SCIENCE (BAYELSA STATE)**

**Question 1: To what extent have the government been able to manage the Niger Delta conflict?**

When you say government, you have to identify the level of government that you are referring to, there are three levels of government in Nigeria; we have the federal, state and local government. Let's start from the federal government; the federal government has been trying to tackle this problem by adopting the method of interventionism; that is, setting up of agencies that should address the developmental problems of the Niger Delta. Now if we should take our minds back, let's say we begin from 1990, the federal government under Ibrahim Babangida regime (1985-1993) established the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC). OMPADEC actually tackled the problem of defects in the area from the point of view of making developmental facilities available. It is also part of our history now that the federal government did not

do well in terms of ensuring that the resources that were allocated to OMPADEC were actually released by the time OMPADEC was winding up in the mid 1990s. It was very clear that government did not obey its own vision in terms of ensuring that money allocated to OMPADEC was released promptly. Then mid way, there was this agitation from other parts of the country that after all oil resources are not just meant for oil producing areas and the dividends of the oil resources should hold on. Government now established Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) and appointed the former head of state, the person of Buhari (1983-1985) to take charge and it is on record that these agencies that were meant to provide supplementary facilities actually took care of the non oil producing areas much more than the oil producing areas. I remember a particular situation when the military governor at that time in Delta State dispatched a team of members of a development committee which eventually went to visit PTF and the Chairman of PTF snubbed them several times and they were unable to see him. When they eventually saw him, the chairman said they should go and manage their own business in Delta State and that PTF is not for oil producing states. When Obasanjo government (1999-2007) set up the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), it is also clear now that federal government did not actually do anything in terms securing development through the agency that was set up, because it did actually bring development to the state. Now the present government has created the ministry of Niger Delta and we also know that what has been allocated to both the ministry of Niger Delta and the NDDC under the 2009 federal budget is just about half of what was allocated to NDDC during the 2008 budget year; so you can see we are not really so sure whether the federal government is really interested in addressing the problems of developmental facility.

Then when you come to the state level of government, the Niger Delta states, we have not actually done well because the Niger Delta states government are totally untrue people than the federal government and when some of them started talking of getting more from the oil resources in terms of propagating the adoption of true fiscal federalism by which they learnt that they will get more out of the oil revenue coming from the oil producing states. Then the former president Obasanjo raised the issue of management, it is on record

that the Niger Delta state governors have actually got so much given to them from the federation account, to what extent have they applied it. My intention is that not much have been done, well we can say like Delta State where we have another agency called Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESOPADEC) which is meant to use the derivation funds from the federation account for the purpose of specifically developing the oil producing communities. DESOPADEC is now there for more than two years and you know that during this period the revenue flowing from oil has been very volatile, prices of crude oil crashed and because of that, what the state government is getting from the derivation funds is declining and for now that has been a constraining factor on the ability of DESOPADEC to actually reach the people in terms of our own development aspirations. May be if the funds were there they would have done better because they equally have a number of plans in terms of providing better health facilities for people in the riverine areas and also to provide other basic amenities.

Then as for the local government, nothing to write home about, if you put all these together you wouldn't give government credit or score them high mark because in terms of whether they have actually addressed the issue. Beside this, we know what initiated the conflict but what is presently propagating it we are not so sure because the situation has gone beyond what it was; when the crisis started nobody was kidnapping any human being for ransom.

**Question 2: Considering the enormity of the Niger Delta conflict, who are the stakeholders responsible for the conflict?**

The stakeholders are people who are interested in propagating a common course, because they are affected by common issues. If you ask me who are the stakeholders, we can say all of us are the stakeholders, but will you really say that those who are propagating this crisis are actually stakeholders? If they are, to what end, because now we are talking about militants, are the militants really the stakeholders? What are they fighting for? Now if we cast our mind back to the early 1990s, they started with the agitation of the Ogonis, they had the Movement of the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), it was quite clear

at that time what they were asking for, they believed that the oil companies had not done enough to develop their land and they also believed the activities of the oil operators were degrading their environment and they carried it in a civilized manner, they went to the newspaper, television even as far as to the United States. They were able to mobilize and showed films about what is going on in the Niger Delta and how oil industrial activities are impacting negatively on the environment. At that time issues of compensation, issues of higher proportion of oil revenue going to the oil producing state and of course these were carried from that initial struggle up to the period of the constitutional conference and it was at that level that a decision was taken that a certain percentage of the total revenue from oil resources should be set aside for the development of the oil producing communities and this will go directly to the state government. We now have in the Nigerian constitution which states that thirteen percent of oil revenue will be given to the oil producing communities, so that was very clear what they were talking about at that time fiscal federalism, so fiscal federalism is the true political counterpart of a constitutional federalism. If you are operating a federal government then you should practice true fiscal federalism, a situation in which the lower levels of government will exercise some autonomy, in deciding some sources of revenue and whatever they get, the people operating the economy can now pay taxes to the government either to the state or federal government, these were the issues at that time, but these issues were later captured by people who we believe were not actually part of the original talk, the militants we are talking about today. Who are they? It is possible some people are fueling their activities, encouraging them to keep on fighting but what are they really fighting for? I don't believe that the militants are truly stakeholders because the objectives for which they are fighting is not well known. Some people even believe that if you want to probe why the militants are fighting it will reveal so many things about corruption in Nigeria system. Some of these boys who have now turned militants were being built and acted as fronts for people who were hiding things in the society like military officers, politicians of highest votes and some of these militants were the people who has been fronting for them and at some point in time may be the deeds were not right and these young men now felt that they were sufficiently grown to go their own ways. The battle for the control of resources is licking in the drain because we are told that so many highly



placed officers and individuals in Nigeria have their own oil plot and they have the freedom to drill oil, it is not a common cook that drill oil, so if they are stakeholders what interest is there? It is interest of self or of the oil communities. The stakeholders to me are those people like you and I who are now visibly affected negatively by the activities of the militants and the people who are backing them up.

In the recent crisis in Delta State you know military men are trained to kill and in the same way trained to die in war so in the civilized world the military man loses his life in the war zone, is it not so? You can see that in the civilized world if an American civilian dies somewhere the government will ask where and how it happened, is it not so? In one of the versions in the Niger Delta some military persons were killed and because of that the military turned its full force on the entire community. If we were in a civilized world the issue of the military would have been to identify those persons, who they think they know, identify them and deal with them.

**Question 3: How would you describe the standard of life in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta?**

Very poor, we have had a number of studies, although the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on human development resource for the Niger Delta in 2006, there were indications that human development index plus so many factors for the Niger Delta was relatively higher than the average for the entire country which is supposing that life for the average is better in the Niger Delta than in other parts of the country, but that is not true because if you go to the interior of the Niger Delta you will see people drinking water from the pit and some times from the river which in most cases people defecate in. More than eighty percent of youths in Bayelsa don't have jobs, have you ever traveled on the Warri-Port Harcourt express road? You will see that the road is very bad. Life in the oil producing communities is very terrible particularly in the riverine communities, there are no roads and other basic amenities, government presence is very negligible and I will say that the government can do more.

**Question 4: Aside social unrest in the Niger Delta, have the media reported in-depth on the implications of environmental degradation in oil producing communities?**

In this area, it is not just the media because the media can only report physical things that people see on television. There are no stations in the Niger Delta for monitoring pollutant level in terms of particle matter, in terms of oxide of sulphur, oxide from nitrogen and even the areas where gas is flared and there is no information on the level of carbon emission which is a very potent factor here in the Niger Delta. You are very aware that Nigeria is the largest flarer of gas in the world; we flare the largest quantity of gas which means that gas flared in flow stations and other parts of oil producing communities, when you add all of them together, they contribute to green house emission which is very high but we are unable to know precisely the level of carbon emission in the Niger Delta. Then water quality, if you go to many of the communities where you have oil, if you dig just twelve feet you will get water, and you will see that the water is mixed with crude oil and this is where people look for water to drink; then crops, crops don't grow well in these areas any longer and when people talk about it, its just like making a point and nothing to say. If you go to the Isoko areas in Delta State you will see that the vegetation is coated with black carbon. If you are driving from Isoko to Warri and to other parts of Ijaw communities (all mentioned locations are within Niger Delta) you will see that crops and fruits have carbon deposits and they don't grow well any longer. Acid rain is a reality in the Niger Delta, so as it were, the media can only report when they have indicators of environmental quality that have been well monitored and recorded but we don't have such agency to monitor and report these issues. The only thing the media report is when there is an oil spill or pipeline vandalisation that they will report, what you see cannot match the actual consequences of the pollution. Is not that we don't have environmental watch dog, although we have the federal ministry of environment but I can tell you that the facilities the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) have are substandard to the facilities that are in possession of the oil companies have so the DPR will rely on the information given by the oil companies in terms of environmental pollution so how are you sure the information is correct and not tampered with.

In terms of information control you know that there is an agreement the oil companies have about their oils which government may not have, if they give all the information they have about destroying the environment, government will sue them. What is the guarantee that the information these oil companies give are correct about their operations and the environment. If you go to the capital of Delta State to ask for the level of temperature you will get information, but if you go to the flow stations and ask them for the quantity of gas flared nobody will give you that information and that is why the role of the press on this issue is ineffective. There was a bill before the national assembly on freedom of access to information bill but till today the bill has not been passed. There is need to have a strong, powerful and independent environmental monitoring agency which will give information about the true state of the environment in the oil producing region of Nigeria; for now we do not have such agencies, the DPR is not well equipped to provide such information. The world health organization have environmental standard, and you will remember that in 1988 the federal environmental protection agency was established. Although, when Obasanjo came into power in 1999 this ministry came under the federal ministry of environment. The mandate given to the federal ministry of environment includes the responsibility of making information available on all aspects of the environment, not only for the oil industry but with specific reference to the oil industry. The bill submitted to the national assembly on access to information which has not been passed till now is hindering access to information from the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta. For example, if you go to shell for information, they will tell you to get a letter from DPR and when you get the letter, they will tell you the person who is qualified to give such information have gone on cross country trip and give you a date to return, and when you go back on that date, they give you a different story in order not to give information.

**Question 5: Would the government move through Amnesty be effective enough to end the Niger Delta conflict?**

Well, when you talk about amnesty, there are some people who will ask some critical questions such as amnesty to who? Who are you giving this amnesty to? What course

were these persons fighting? Or, is it now a virtue to be a criminal? And at the end of the day government will say for you being a criminal we want to settle you; then there will be no end to it. I don't think that amnesty to some individuals who have been identified as criminals will solve the problem of the Niger Delta because the problem of the Niger Delta is not the problem of arresting personal poverty; because those people who are fighting, they are fighting to enhance their own economic conditions just for themselves and not for the entire Niger Delta society. Until the larger question of underdevelopment is resolved this problem will continue to surface because if people now know that when you carry arms and make so much noise, one day government will identify you and settle you, then it becomes a virtue.

**Question 6: From management perspective, what are your views on the Niger Delta conflict?**

Management perspective, in terms of what, is it managing the crisis? Or, managing the development crisis? Is it managing the crisis of human suffering? Or, managing the crisis of warfare? Or, managing the problem of underdevelopment? Well, first and foremost, I believe very strongly that one way or the surest way of solving this problem is to ensure that the areas that produce the wealth of the nation they should seize developmental facilities. Let there be good roads, twenty-four hours electricity supply, schools, health facilities, then those who don't have jobs and want to be gainfully employed in working life, should be supported true soft loans to set up their own business so that the problem of unemployment can be drastically solved. Nigeria is still a public sector to be related with because of the system and there is so much corruption in the system. If you are able to tackle the problem of corruption at all level from federal, to state and to the local government the country will be stable.

If you take the local government as the last tier of government, what is the quality of human needs who are living there? Do they have any aspirations as to the direction they should take in development? Do they have idea of the type of projects that people in other places have to sustain their economy? You can actually see at the local level what is

happening; they can't management what they get because the politicians don't give the people what they want instead they provide for themselves with what they want. They should manage effectively the little resources that are available to them and make sure that the people are part of the role of governance because that is the current path way to development. If the people are involved in the governance right from the planning to the execution level, the chances are that there will be trust; however, if there is no trust development will not be consistent. We have to manage the resources that we have, right now we live on oil, there are so many countries in Africa that don't have oil and even with the other natural resources we have in the Niger Delta, we can do away with oil and still survive. Look at the coast line of the Niger Delta, if some countries in the world have the kind of coast line that we have, tourism alone is enough to sustain the economy. Other areas such as agriculture in which we have the condition to grow more than half of the food stuff the world needs but nobody is looking at that area, or is it coal, textile, we are depending solely on oil sales and yet we complain of under development, the day the oil will finish, what are we going to do? We have the natural resources and environment to survive as an economy in the Niger Delta.

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