Loughborough University

CHILDREN'S VOICES ON THE IMPACTS OF OIL EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

A Case Study on the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

By

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ABSTRACT

Children are a unique and highly diverse group of people within society. However, engaging with children's voices has only recently become prominent in academic and international discourses. This thesis contributes to this engagement with children's voices by focusing on their experiences as shaped by oil extraction activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. While there is a vast body of literature on the implications of oil exploration activities in the region, little attention has been paid to children's lives. To counterbalance this tendency, this study aims to explore children's perceptions, experiences, and coping strategies in relation to the challenging circumstances of oil exploration operations in their communities. Adopting a critical perspective that views children as social actors with basic rights, this study also examines children's access to basic needs within the context of these oil industry operations.

This research has used a quantitative and multi-qualitative methodological approach to data collection. Although children's voices are the study's focal point, the perceptions of adult stakeholders such as parents/carers, community leaders and oil company representatives were also used to explore children's lives and synthesize the discussions in the study. The results reveal that, while the Nigerian government has adopted the vocabulary enshrined in the UNCRC to enhance children's access to basic rights, in reality, the actions of the federal government and oil companies appear to be inconsistent with the fundamental principles of children's rights. Specifically, findings reveal that the adverse impacts of oil extraction activities have severely hampered children's lives and that, as a result, children have adopted harmful coping strategies. Additionally, by presenting the voices of children and adults separately, results show that children's views differed significantly from adult's perceptions on matters concerning children. The findings of this study relate the research to some of the key debates in children's geographies about children and childhood, especially within the context of the global South.

This thesis argues that children are an integral part of society and that any meaningful strategy for development in the Niger Delta region must take into account their roles as social actors. Moreover, it must fully acknowledge the specific impacts that oil exploration activities have had on the lives of children in the communities affected and examine how these might be addressed.

Key words: children, childhood, rights, experiences, oil exploration, Niger Delta.

DEDICATION

To God Almighty

To my husband Joseph Tubodei Penawou

And

Our three lovely children: Preye, Ebiere and Joseph

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CDC	Community Development Committee
CENDIA	Centre for Issues on Development in Africa
CRA	Children's Rights Act
CRIN	Children's Rights International Network
DESOPADEC	Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission
EFA	Education For All
ESMAP	Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
FMWASD	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
FOS	Federal Office of Statistics
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITUC	The International Trade Union Confederation
JSS	Junior Secondary School
LEEDS	Local Government Economic Empowerment Development Strategy
MGDs	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDR	Niger Delta Region
NECO	National Examinations Council
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
OECD/IEA	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development /International Energy Agency
OMPADEC	Oil Mineral Producing Areas Developments Commission
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSOPADEC	Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
SEEDS	State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy

SPDC	Shell Petroleum Development Company
SSS	Senior Secondary School
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
WAEC	West African Examination Council

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines a general framework for the thesis, which includes an overview of the background to the research and a specification of the problem being investigated. The chapter introduces and discusses major elements such as the overall research aims and objectives, research questions, study expectations, the methodological approaches employed, and an explanation of the research structure. The chapter also provides a brief overview of earlier studies related to children in the Niger Delta in order to indicate where this research fits and how it contributes to the overall body of knowledge in this area.

1.1   Context and Problem of Study

Children have often been perceived as a minority and muted group. Over the past decades, however, debates on children and childhood and studies on children's voices, experiences, and participation have gained a more prominent place in society (James and Prout, 1990; Jenks, 1996; Rogers 2003; Skovdal *et al.,* 2009). This gradual change has also been reflected in the growing number of social science researchers—such as geographers— interested in the everyday experiences and spatiality of children and young people's lives. Although existing research by geographers focuses primarily on the lives of children and young people in the global North, there is emerging interest in the global South (Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Katz, 2004; Ansell, 2005; Abebe, 2007; Evans, 2012; Langevang and Gough, 2012). Notwithstanding the research already undertaken, our understanding of children's social spaces and experiences in the global South still requires considerable academic research. Thus, this thesis has been stimulated by the continuing academic debate about how children's lives are socially and spatially structured within societies in the global South. Particularly, this study focuses on how children's lived experiences in the Niger Delta (NDR) of Nigeria are inextricably linked to the impacts of oil exploration processes. Oil exploration processes in this sense, includes five main areas of operation: prospecting, drilling, production, transportation and refining operations (Ezemonye, 2001). Thus this study examines how oil exploration processes involving these activities affect children's lives in the local communities of the Niger Delta region.

The Niger Delta region is home to Nigeria's oil and gas resources—the mainstay of the country's economy, however, its defining features over the years have included pervasive poverty, conflict, and oil pollution. Given the region's immense oil wealth, the paradox of poverty in the midst of abundant resources has attracted local and global attention. Against this backdrop, the Niger Delta has long been a subject of academic investigation (see World Bank, 1995; Ibeanu, 1997; HRW, 1999/2002; UNDP, 2006; Amnesty International, 2009). Interestingly, in an effort to deconstruct the conundrum of the Niger Delta region, studies have often focused on the physical, environmental, and socio-economic impacts of oil exploration activities (Egborge, 2000; Ikein, 2004; Watts, 2004; Omofonwan and Odia, 2009). While research has begun to focus on the implications for particular social groups, e.g., on the experiences of women (Joab-Peterside, 2010; Oluwaniyi, 2010) or youth (Akpan and Akpabio, 2003; Ikelegbe, 2006; Ojakorotu, 2006; Abebe, 2007; Emanuel *et al.,* 2009), children's experiences have thus far largely been ignored.

One plausible reason for the under-representation of children's experiences in existing analyses of the region's problems is that some elements of local communities—in particular, youth and women—have drawn national and international attention by engaging in protests and conflicts with the federal government and oil companies in relation to their concerns over homeland destruction, poverty, and the lack of beneficial outcomes from the vast revenues[1] accruing to the nation as a whole from the region (see Turner, 1993; Obi, 2005). The federal government and oil companies have, on several occasions, initiated development programmes and skills acquisition packages for youth and women in the region, presuming that a major determinant of the problems experienced in the region relates to a historical lack of focus on the negative impacts of oil exploration on these groups. Nevertheless, considering that the research (see, for example, UNICEF, 2000) suggests that children are often hardest hit by poverty and that social conflicts frequently present severe additional challenges to the maintenance of children's dignity and fundamental rights, this study aims to provide an opportune investigation of the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's experiences, rights, vulnerabilities, and coping strategies in the Niger Delta region.

By listening to children's voices and presenting their experiences, this study expects to contribute to the literature on children's geographies, particularly the experiences of

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[1] Okonjo-Iweala, *et al.*, 2003 argue that between 1970 and 2000, Nigeria generated about US$ 300 billion from the oil sector alone.

children in the global South. In addition, by providing data and information on children's lives in the Niger Delta region, this study will contribute to a broader long-term goal by providing informed decisions that could mitigate the negative impacts of oil exploration activities on children in local communities.

1.2   Gaps in the Body of Literature on the Niger Delta Region

The literature relating to children in the Niger Delta region is very sparse, and the few studies that exist do not focus specifically on children. For instance, while discussing the challenges that women in the region face as a result of oil pollution, several studies mention 'children' in the context of how women struggle to provide them with sustenance. These studies argue that oil exploration activities have undermined the capability of families to feed, clothe, and educate their children (Clark *et al.,* 1999; Omorondion, 2004; Gabriel, 2004; Edoho, 2008). Also, numerous studies focusing on the impacts of poverty and unemployment in the region also indicate that children often look for seasonal jobs in oil multinationals because they offer high remuneration (Clark *et al.,* 1999; Omorodion, 2004; UNDP, 2006).

Given the pervasive poverty in the region, these studies also point to the upsurge in child labour, the increased risks to children's health, and their growing involvement in community protests and militancy. For instance, UNDP (2006:18) argues that "oil exploratory activities produce men with easy money who engage in risky sexual behaviour with girls driven into prostitution by poverty." A study by Clark *et al.* (1999) also suggests that, as a result of poverty, some young boys have become street hawkers and engage in deviant behaviour such as cultism and armed robbery, while many young girls have resorted to prostitution as a way to pay for their education and sustain themselves. In addition, several studies have touched on the adverse impacts of oil exploration on children while discussing subjects such as the challenges of education in the region (Omorodion, 2004; UNDP, 2006; Olusegun and Olufunmilayo, 2008). Other studies have also indicated the loss of human lives due to community crises (Alemika, *et al.,* 2005) and from the impacts of oil spills (ERA/FoEN, 1998; HRW, 1999; UNDP, 2006) in the region. Further discussion of the existing literature relating to the children in the Niger Delta region is presented in Section 3.6.

While acknowledging the insights that these studies provide in discussing the lives of children, the view that these reports generally present is an adult-oriented perspective rather than one that engages with children's own opinions. The existing literature has also tended to perceive children as a homogeneous group rather than as individuals subject to peculiar factors that have shaped their experiences or coping strategies. Even reports such as that of Amnesty International (2009), which includes a few views expressed by children, focus on general discussions of livelihoods and environmental impacts in the region and not on the lives of children *per se*.

This thesis seeks to address the gaps identified in the preceding discussion by focusing on children's voices within a discussion of the impacts of oil exploration activities on their lives. In this study, perceptions of adult stakeholders at the community and national levels on oil exploration activities and its impacts on children's everyday lives will also be presented separately to synthesise the information from the findings. However, children's perceptions of the complex influences of oil exploration activities are explored in a context of a theoretical underpinning that is informed by a children's rights framework (see below) and the inherent assumption—drawn from the 'new' social studies of childhood literature—that children are social actors in their own right. The thesis also aims to contribute to the geographical debates over the theorisation of the child/adult relationship and to explore how parents/carers, community leaders, and other stakeholders in the Niger Delta communities perceive children's identities and experiences.

As suggested above, one of the key international discourses informing this study relates to the framing of children's access to basic rights. From the early 1990s, it became increasingly necessary for governments, national agencies, and their various international partners to identify with children's rights and wellbeing as part of a national human development effort. As noted by Grugel (2013), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), has set initiatives and standards for state parties with the aim to guarantee children social protection and access to basic rights. Consequently, Nigeria became a signatory to the UNCRC in 1991 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 2001. In 2003, the Nigerian government promulgated the Child's Rights Act (CRA), which has so far been passed into law by 26 (out of its 36) States including all the Niger Delta States. While the Nigerian government appears to be committed to protecting and ensuring children's rights (via various municipal

laws and international instruments), several authors argue that there is a vacuum regarding the government's role in executing the fundamental principles of protecting children's rights (Afonja, 1996; Alemika *et al.,* 2005; Okoye, 2011). Accordingly, this thesis also aims to investigate the role of oil companies and the federal government in meeting their obligation to ensuring children's access to basic rights in the Niger Delta region.

1.3   Research Aims and Questions

The main aim of this study is to examine the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's lives. The four main objectives of this thesis are to:

i)   Examine the accounts of children's voices, lived experiences and coping strategies in relation to oil exploration activities.

ii)   Investigate how children themselves understand their spaces for action, their rights and responsibilities.

iii)   Examine adult's perceptions of the impacts of oil exploration activities on children.

iv)   Critically assess the dividends from oil wealth, and oil benefits to the Niger Delta children through the availability of, and access to, social infrastructures and facilities.

In order to achieve these central aims, the thesis addresses the following research questions:

i)   How do children perceive the impacts of oil exploration activities within their communities?

ii)   How have children's coping strategies affected their well-being in their communities?

iii)   What are the perceptions of stakeholders (parents/carers, community leaders, school representatives) on the impacts of oil exploration on children in the communities?

iv)   How do the federal government and multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta region represent the values of children in the region?

1.4   Working Definition of a Child

At this stage, it is imperative to ask, 'What is a child?' Although this study focuses on children, the definition of the child often raises complex and contestable arguments. With no widely accepted definition, authors have argued that, because children themselves have generally not been considered as having a legitimate voice in influencing its construction, the question, 'What is a child', is answered mostly by adults and is largely a function of adult preconceptions, expectations, and experiences (Freeman, 1983; Heywood, 2001; Nicholson, 2001).

Holloway and Valentine (2000) suggest that a child is commonly assumed to be a biological construct defined by chronological age. Thus, the child is perceived as a subject younger than an adult. In the most general sense, this perception of the child as 'less-than adult' assumes him or her to be innocent and in need of adult protection. For instance, within this idea of chronological age markings, Article 1 of the UNCRC (UNCRC, 1989) adopts a universal approach by defining a child as every human being that is below the age of 18. The Convention sets out provisions and principles that guide the civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights of children around the world irrespective of their colour, race, gender, opinions, religion, wealth, or birth status. While the UNCRC has been ratified by 191 states, the Convention's 0-17 broad age categorisation of children has been argued to be problematic and controversial (White, 2003; Ansell, 2005).

For Roche (1999), the numerical child definition of 0-17 is problematic mainly because it generalizes the experiences of a day-old child and a 17-year-old child. Specifically, Roche argues that "the world and average experiences of a 15-year-old are closer to those of an adult than that of a 15-month-old – yet both are children" (1999:9). White (2003) argues further that, not only does the chronological definition of a child overlap child/adult boundaries, but the broad category of 0-17 years of age merges people who have very little in common. Other scholars have also problematised the setting of a universal child/adult boundary, given the heterogeneous group of people referred to as youth, adolescent, and young people/young adults in various countries (Valentine, 2003; Ansell, 2005). Ansell (2005), for example notes that in Malaysia, the Youth Council defines youths as those aged between 15 and 40, while in other countries factors such as whether an individual is married or has borne children are used to determine age categories.

This problem has also been recognised within the framework of the UN through statements that acknowledge that the meaning and definition of children vary across countries and cultures. Thus, for example, the UN states that the age definition of a child as below 18 years is intentional because it was hoped that the Convention would provide protection and rights to as large an age-range as possible and because there were no similar conventions on the rights of adolescents, youths and/or young people (UNCRC, 1989). In view of this, while Article 1 of the UNCRC defines a child as anyone under the age of 18, it adds that "unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." This means that countries can determine the legal age of majority.

For instance, although 18 years is set as the general age of majority in India, the Indian constitution sets the minimum compulsory age of education at 14 and prohibits child labour for children below the ages of 14 (ICWA, 1998). The constitution also sets the marriage age for girls at 18 and 21 for boys. In Nigeria, according to the Children and Young People's Act (CYPA) of 1958, a child is defined as a person under the age of 14 (Alemika, *et al.,* 2005), but the CRA, which was passed into law in 2003, defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of 18 years. The Nigerian labour Act also prohibits children under the age of 16 from working underground, on machines, at night, more than four consecutive hours, or more than eight hours a day[2] (Nigerian Labour Act, 1990).

Accordingly, most of the relevant UN agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) use a variety of age categories for children, youth, adolescents, and young people. For example, as shown in Table 1.1, a UNFPA (2003) report uses overlapping age categories when discussing the state of the world's population.

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[2] Nigerian Labour Act, Article 59

Table 1.1: UN Definition of Children, Adolescents, Youths and Young People

Categories□	Bracket
Children	Under 18
Youth	15-24
Adolescence	10-19
Young People	10-24

Source: Adapted from UNFPA (2003)

Taking into consideration the various debates on chronological age markings of the child, this thesis situates the definition of a child within the Nigerian CRA of 2003, mainly because the Niger Delta States (on which the thesis will focus) have enacted the CRA into their legal systems. However, caution will be taken to point out discrepancies (such as age overlapping definitions) in the research area.

1.5   The Research Methods and Study Areas

The data for this study was gathered using multi-qualitative techniques, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, direct observations, and analysis of secondary documentation completed during 2007 and 2008. Detailed discussions on the limitations and strengths of the techniques employed will be addressed in Chapter Four. A qualitative thematic analysis technique involving a coding method is utilised to analyse the data collected for the study. Factors such as children's education status, gender, age, and ethnic group are also used as variables for comparative analysis. Although the information collected was mainly qualitative, some quantitative methods of data analysis, such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel, were used where appropriate to organise the vast amount of qualitative information collected and the complex nature of the interrelationships between various study participants. As indicated by Abeyasekera (2000), using quantitative analysis in a qualitative study can help separate components of data to allow the researcher to concentrate on the study's key qualitative findings.

1.6   Research Study Areas and Target Groups

This study focuses on three states in the Niger Delta region: Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta. Within these states, nine communities were selected for study. In the Rivers State, we focus on the Bodo, B-Dere, and Kpean communities; in Bayelsa, we look at the Gbarantoru, Ogboloma, and Imiringi communities; and in Delta, we concentrate on the Okpai Oluchi, Beneku, and Oporoza communities. The criteria for the communities selected are addressed in detail in Chapter 4.

Whilst this study echoes the perception of children as competent social actors (Valentine, 1997; Skelton and Valentine, 2003), this research was designed to focus on children between the ages of 10 and 17. This age range was chosen because within the Niger Delta region, children younger than 10 are less likely to be allowed by parents/carers to speak independently to a researcher. Other than children, data was also elicited information from participants at the community and national levels.

1.7   Positionality of the Researcher in Relation to Communities Studied

Although the above sub-heading has been extensively discussed in Chapter Four, nonetheless, in this section, we want to consider albeit briefly, positionality issues in relation to the communities studied. It is often said that as a researcher in the social sciences, one's positionality in terms of religion, sexuality, race, nationality, age, economic status and gender may affect the validity of the research outcome (Dowling, 2005; Hopkins, 2007). Considering this, this research was conducted with the knowledge that depending on the nature of the relationship that exists between the subjects of study and the researcher, the validity of the findings could be weakened or strengthened. However, a useful approach to addressing this problem is the employment of critical reflexivity within the research process (Rose, 1997). This does not mean altering the research design, but modifying it by considering what you are doing, how and why you are doing it (Kobayashi, 2003). As noted by Stanley and Wise (1993), researcher's details should be communicated to participants as a pre-requisite of ethical research in social sciences. Consequently, in order to avoid any misconceptions on the part of the respondents, each respondent in this study was furnished with details about the researcher's professional background, status and relationship with the research project. At the same time, drawing on my experience,

revealing the researcher's self to participants, became central to multiple positionalities between the researcher and the researched.

During my field work in the Niger Delta region, I became aware of prevailing positionalities or certain kinds of power, at the children's and community levels. For instance, in some cases, I was perceived as *'one of them'* (some participants were happy with the understanding that my husband and I are from states within the Niger Delta region). In other cases, I was also considered as '*not one of them*' mainly as some participants perceived that I was not from the core Niger Delta States since I was from Imo state (see Section 3.3.1 for discussion on the Niger Delta States) and at the same time, in some circumstances I enjoyed the special status of '*our visitor from England*' (some participants were excited to find out what the United Kingdom was all about).

Apart the nature of relationship that existed between the researcher and participants at the community level, there were also prevailing positionalities or certain kinds of power between the researcher and participants at the national level. These sets of participants all held higher social positions (and were older) than the researcher and were used to being interviewed by research students. In this respect, participants felt they were in a more powerful position. Consequently, as shown in Chapter Four, power relations with research respondents were reflected upon and noted to be reciprocal, asymmetrical and/or potentially exploitative, as classified by Smith (1998).

1.8   Synopsis of Chapters

This study is organised into eight chapters;

Chapter One, *Introduction,* presents a brief overview of the structure of the study. It describes the key elements of the issues to be investigated and why they are felt to be important, it also presents the broad aims of the study, the research questions and the methodological approaches employed.

Chapter Two, *Perspectives on Children and Childhood,* examines the dynamic literature on children and childhood and outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that inform the research. By reviewing the 'new' social studies of childhood framework and the children's rights framework at the United Nations level, this chapter explores and critiques the existing geographical and social science literature concerned with children, childhood

and children's rights. This chapter also focuses on the different meanings of children's rights and how these rights are constructed and negotiated in the global South and in Africa with a specific interest in Nigeria.

Chapter Three, *Nigeria and Oil Exploration - the Niger Delta Region,* gives a brief description of Nigeria and presents some of the major features of the study area, commonly referred to as the Niger Delta region. The main aim of this chapter is to familiarise the reader with the Niger Delta and to establish the dynamic interconnectedness between Nigeria, oil resource exploitation and the people of the region. The chapter also explores the negative impacts occasioned by oil exploration and exploitation in the region along with the contradictions of development and the attendant consequences. It then assesses the responses to these contradictions by the oil-bearing communities, the oil multinationals and the Nigerian state, particularly the federal government.

Chapter Four, *Research Methodology,* describes the methodological and epistemological approaches employed in the study. It then discusses the process of data collection, the problems and limitations encountered during the data collection and solutions that evolved to deal with them. The chapter also explores further the study's key aims, objectives and research questions and discusses the data analysis techniques used to address and answer them. Ethical issues and the dynamic nature of undertaking qualitative research with children in an African setting are also examined.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven focus on the research findings and thematic analysis discussions. These chapters present children's voices and experiences in their school and home environments and the everyday representations of their lives in relation to oil exploration activities in their communities. The discussions in these chapters also explore whether key issues such as gender, age, educational status and the nature of specific community settings, played significant roles in the responses of children who took part in this study. In addition, the chapter examines how various agents at the community level (such as parents/carers, community leaders and school representatives) perceive children's experiences of living in oil-affected communities. Further, the chapter evaluates the views of oil company representatives and federal government agencies and their role in shaping children's experiences. A breakdown of the structure within the analysis chapters is presented as follows:

Chapter Five, *Perceptions of 'a child', Children's Rights, Interests and Oil Companies' Activities,* discusses participants' views of child definition, community provisions for children's interests, communities' awareness of the CRA, the awareness of oil company operations and their general knowledge of oil exploration activities.

Chapter Six, *Impacts of Oil Exploration Activities on Food, Water, and Health and Housing Facilities,* captures children and adult perceptions of how children deal with oil exploration activities and the impacts on their everyday lives.

Chapter Seven, *Impacts of Oil Exploration Activities on Child Education, Work and Play Spac*es, also presents children and adult's perceptions of how oil exploration activities affect these aspects of children's lives. In Chapter Seven, the suggestions proffered by participants on enhancing the lives of children in the region are also examined.

Chapter Eight, *Conclusion and Recommendations,* sums up the findings in relation to the main objectives of this thesis. This chapter also draws together the summary from the discussions of each chapter and then presents the main conclusions from the thesis as a whole. Finally this chapter sets out the researcher's recommendations based on the results of the study.

2
CHAPTER TWO
PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD

2.1   Introduction

This chapter presents a careful review of the literature on children and childhood which effectively forms a theoretical toolbox for the thesis. A body of literature on children and childhood connecting three perspectives will be explored in this chapter. Specifically, the varying discourses on children and childhood within Global, African and Nigerian contexts will be the focus of this chapter.

First, the section on a global perspective examines the general debates and discussions over the different constructions of children and childhood. This section draws from geographers' contributions and those of cognate disciplines, representing different schools of thought on childhood. It explores the continually changing meanings which are attached to childhood and the discourses on what childhood is or is not. The section also presents the theoretical frameworks that underpin the empirical data analysis and discussion chapters. In particular, this study adopts a combination of two theoretical frameworks: the 'new' social studies of childhood approach and the theoretical approach by the UNCRC framework on children's rights. The 'new' social studies of childhood approach is based on the inherent assumption that children are social actors with rights to express themselves in their own ways, while the theoretical underpinning informed by the UNCRC framework on children's rights provides some underlying basic principles regarding children's total wellbeing. This section aims to integrate, synthesise and build a bridge between these two frameworks to provide a lens through which the research questions can be addressed and the objectives of this thesis achieved.

The second section focuses on African children and childhoods. By exploring African childhoods, discussions will delve into pre-colonial, colonial and modern childhood experiences. This section examines how different and contradictory notions of childhood are negotiated by various actors from pre-colonial practices to the post-independence period. The historical dimensions are important since they and not merely those of the

modern era alone have played significant roles in the production of the current African childhood. While focusing on current interpretations of African childhoods, this section also explores the transformation of traditional understandings of childhood in Africa, as well as the appropriateness of the international child-related instruments adopted by African societies. The focus on African children is not in any way meant to diminish the importance or significance of the construction of childhood in other regions of the global South. However, by establishing a global picture of African children and childhood, this chapter helps to situate and understand the lives of children in Nigeria.

The third section shifts the emphasis onto the lives of children in Nigeria. The focus on Nigeria is important because it provides a background for the subsequent chapters reporting on the field study of the lives of children in the Niger Delta region. In particular, the link between children's wellbeing and access to various basic rights in Nigeria is examined in detail here. Additionally, the challenges faced by the national efforts and the government's policies in addressing some of the social issues concerning children are investigated. In that regard, given that Nigeria, like the rest of Africa, has shown enthusiasm by ratifying the regional and international treaties on the protection and promotion of children's rights, the chapter also goes on to consider the constraints posed by the UNCRC (in full) and other international child policies.

Finally, the concluding section draws together the main issues from the discussions and attempts to offer an insight into the vulnerabilities and difficulties that have imposed some considerable measure of stress on the lives of Nigerian children.

2.2   Global Context: Representations of Children and Childhood

Literatures on childhood are intriguing, rich and complex, with their central concepts changing continually from medieval times. Prior to the 1980s, childhood studies were largely on the margins of academic disciplines; however, in recent times the conceptualisation of childhood has gained an important place in society and has become increasingly important to social researchers and policy makers (James and Prout, 1990; Jenks, 1996; Rogers, 2003; Ansell, 2005). This growing attention has been influenced by debates over the different constructions of children and childhood utilized by academic researchers and international organisations within a framework of historical, social, political, and economic discourses. The next section will explore the historical evolution of

perspectives on childhood with the aim of presenting how authors, over time, have tried to make sense of what childhood is and its different constructions.

2.2.1   Historical Images of Childhood

One of the most influential writers whose work has led theorists and researchers to challenge the construction of childhood is the French historian Philippe Ariès. In his book Centuries of Childhood (1962), Ariès argues that the notion of European childhood has been transformed from the medieval understanding of childhood as "not being separate from adulthood to being separated in the modern era". That is to say there has been a transition in how childhood is viewed from the medieval to the modern periods. Specifically, Ariès suggests that before the fifteenth century children were treated like miniature adults, with no special status or protection. In his opinion, "medieval art ... did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it … it seems more probable that there was no place for childhood in the medieval world" (1962:33). Using literary representations and pictures of children as the sources of his argument, Ariès claimed that childhood was perceived as an unimportant phase of physical and mental immaturity as children were clothed in adult costumes and were portrayed like mini-adults in paintings. In expounding on Ariès' thesis, Kellett and Ding (2004) argue that, for Ariès, there was no transitional period between infancy and adulthood in medieval times. To put it differently, childhood did not exist during the medieval period. However, towards the sixteenth century Ariès posits that there became a distinction in the image of childhood as children were gradually separated from adults and beginning to be understood as representing a separate conceptual category. Ariès' view also establishes that the educational revolution of the sixteenth century was pivotal to the progressive removal of children from adult society into their own spaces.

While Ariès' arguments have been referenced widely in debates on childhood discourses, his views have not been without criticism. Ariès' work has, for example, been criticized as misleading on the basis that his ideas were ambiguous and drawn from western cultural ideas, which failed to take account of other cultural ideas on childhood (Jenks, 1996; Heywood, 2001). In support of this argument, it is clear that Ariès' insights on childhood are only of limited value since they do not take into consideration the dynamics of medieval representations in non-western societies, particularly in African societies where

transitions from childhood to adulthood were often carried out with rituals and rites of passage, as will be explored in other parts of this chapter.

Perhaps more importantly, Ariès' views tend to be adultcentric, which meant that his arguments are not a representative of children's perceptions of what childhood means to them, rather, his arguments are drawn based on adult initiatives, tendencies and evaluations. Also, there seems to be a general opinion from other scholars such as Archard (1993) that simply because a medieval presentation of childhood is different to a modern understanding of childhood is not sufficient to adopt Ariès' view that childhood did not exist in the western medieval era. Kroll (1977) reaffirms this by pointing out that Ariès' arguments about the lack of a separate childhood in medieval times, could simply reflect a failure to recognise that the distinct phases of childhood identified in medieval times were different to those articulated in the present era.

In a separate critique, Montgomery (2009) suggests that for all the insight his arguments provide, Ariès may have put too much emphasis on paintings and artistic representations which meant that he ignored other sources of information on children. Further, Pollock (1983) proposed that her research from diaries, autobiographies, journals and newspaper accounts on parent-child relationships between 1500 and 1900 disagrees with Ariès' argument on childhood, particularly as her findings showed strong attachments between parents and their children in medieval periods and maintains that parents showed grief at the death of their infants. Although Ariès' work acknowledged the existence of medieval parent-child attachments, he attempted to distinguish this from the care and devotion lavished on children in the twentieth century. For instance Ariès (1962:128) stated that:

> "This is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular which distinguishes the child from the adult… In medieval society this awareness was lacking."

However, in spite of the criticisms, some co-thinkers of Ariès have maintained that the history of childhood in the modern world is a recent invention. Resonating with Ariès' concept of childhood, Hunt (1972) and Hoyles (1979) both demonstrated that the perception of children as a special entity is revolutionary and an emergence of a new society. For instance, while Hoyles established that the concept of childhood is a social

practice that has evolved over time, Hunt explained medieval approaches toward childhood from a psycho-analytic analysis of family life by studying the 17th century French notion of childhood. Following this trend, De Mause, an American psychologist, also suggested that there has been a progressive change of concept in the way childhood is understood throughout the centuries. He argued that "the history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken … the further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused" (De Mause, 1976:1). By focusing on child abuse, his study of the psychological motivations of historical events portrayed a negative image of medieval childhood similar to Ariès' notions. He argues that abusive rearing as part of childhood in the medieval times gradually evolved to the modern less abusive and caring approach of child rearing practices. On the other hand, however, scholars such as Pollock (1983) have contested De Mause's arguments by asserting that his study narrated accounts of child abuse but that these did not necessarily throw light on how childhood was perceived more generally in the medieval era.

Without completely mirroring Ariès' perception of childhood, Zelizer's (1985) position supports the idea of the evolution of approaches in childhood when she argues that, towards the nineteenth century, the emergence of industrialisation/urbanisation contributed to strongly shifting patterns of social and family life. By considering the changing social value of children, she argued that the concept of childhood had shifted from that of a "useful image" to an "economically worthless" but "emotionally priceless" modern image (Zelizer, 1985:209). In a bid to support this argument, Zelizer used examples from two court cases involving child deaths in the United States. The first example was a court case which occurred in the late 19th century. In this scenario, the family of the dead child was only awarded burial compensation by the court on the premise that the child (a two-year old) was not a wage earner. In the example of the second court case, which occurred in the early 20th century, the family was not only awarded a large sum of money but the court also indicated that the dead child (a three-year old) was irreplaceable.

Based on the above examples, Zelizer maintains that the difference in the images of the child in these court cases can be attributed to the series of industrial and educational reforms that occurred in the late nineteenth century. For Zelizer, these changes played a crucial role in the gradual removal of children from workplaces to this new unproductive

modern concept of childhood. That is to say that the fundamental changes in children's economic activities such as the abolition of child labour and establishment of compulsory schooling during the nineteenth century were significant in re-constituting childhood and the emergence of the modern child. However, Zelizer's account has been criticised by a number of writers. Greene (2008), for example, points out that Zelizer's generalizing is unrealistic as her study focused on white American families, while ignoring representations of childhood in the rural South, particularly in African-American families.

On the basis of the preceding discussion, it can be seen that childhood has experienced a transition from a medieval construct to a modern construct. However, the generalisation that childhood has evolved from a negative representation where children did not represent a conceptual space to a positive representation have mainly been drawn from western studies. For example, many studies that have focused on the lives of African children tend to suggest that the impacts of globalisation and poor patterns of socio-economic developments have in fact evolved the construct of African childhoods from a positive to a negative representation. An example that clearly describes this argument is Cheney's (2005) study of child soldiers in Africa. Other scholars such as Mbembe and Nuttal (2004:364) have also described negative post-colonial African childhoods in the context of "radical uncertainty, unpredictability and insecurity" due to a youth crisis and political insecurity in these regions.

Also presenting the images of childhood in historical sequence is Jenks (2005), who suggests two images of childhood: the Dionysian and the Apollonian. Jenks' analysis suggests that the Dionysian child is reflected in the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of the Adamic original sin, in which children were construed as evil and born in sin. In explaining this, Smith (2011) notes that this image perceives children as basically bad, born into this world as evil beings and characterised by wildness and wilfulness. Thus, children were construed as little devils, evil and corrupt or as "sinful polluted creatures" (Hendrick, 1997:40). However, the Apollonian image contrasts with the Dionysian child in that it perceives children as angelic, innocent and untainted by the world which they have recently entered (Jenks, 2005).

According to Jenks, before the twentieth century, the Dionysian view dominated views of the child in the west but this view then shifted towards the Apollonian image reflecting changes in society and in particular its understanding concerning children in relation to

questions of social order. For example, he maintains that the Dionysian model is related to the "old European order" where the child is perceived as requiring strict parental or adult control from an early stage in order to exhibit good behaviours (Jenks, 2005:66). Focusing on disciplinary powers, Smith (2011) notes that in the Dionysian image, the power to discipline to conform and control, remains with the adult. Conversely, the Apollonian image is linked to the "new order of modern industrial society" (Jenks, 2005:66). In this case, the child is perceived as having natural goodness and thereby requiring adults to display a milder power of protection and social control (this can be connected to Rousseau's (1773) argument that children are innocent and should be permitted to grow naturally with minimal parental control). In both images of children, Holloway and Valentine (2000:4) consider these childhood constructions to be problematic particularly as they view children's behaviours as being "natural tendencies which must be shaped or curbed by adults". Other commentators such as Ansell (2005) have however argued that the whole question of whether children are seen as angels or devils is not helpful and have criticized Jenks' views as purely western and problematic.

Regardless of the criticisms, authors such as Murphy (2007) have noted that the Dionysian image of the child is apparent in recent UK child rearing practices particularly in parenting orders, which tend to ensure that children are at home at certain times and children are restricted from visiting certain places. While Murphy's views have some validity, some aspects of parenting orders within the UK could also be related to the Apollonian image in which children are perceived as good but needing protection. Other authors focusing on the UK have noted that both the Dionysian and the Apollonian images of childhood resonate in the UK's child-related anti-social behavioural measures. Take for instance Cassidy's (2012) study on children's status and rights which submits that the UK has designed measures that seem to treat children as reflecting an element of innocence and naivety, as well as measures that see children as innately bad. In essence, he argues that the UK judicial system adopts the Dionysian image by setting a minimum age for children's criminal responsibility; while the Apollonian image is reflected in the fact that children are never tried in adult courts regardless of the enormity of the crime. Ansell (2005) also argues that a careful analysis of the UNCRC's perception of children suggests that it has been derived from the Apollonian image, particularly as children are perceived as vulnerable and innocent.

Apart from these debates, there exists another historical view of childhood in the seventeenth century that perceives the child neither in the Apollonian nor Dionysian perceptions but rather as a tabula rasa. The view of the tabula rasa developed from an English Philosopher, John Locke (1632-1704), who posited that children are neither born as good or bad but as blank without any innate mental content (Kellet *et al*., 2004). According to Locke, while children can exhibit personalities, such as likes or dislikes, when born, their minds, however, are like blank slates until shaped by their experiences of the outside world particularly by adult behaviours. By this, the image of the child is shaped by environmental influences such as parenting and educational elements. Drawing on Rousseau's (1773) arguments, rather than perceiving the child as a blank mind or evil, Rousseau contends that children should be perceived as naturally good and this purity should be protected. Rousseau elaborated this argument in his book *Emile*, or *On Education* by focusing on a child's natural goodness and the way a child-centred educational scheme should be carried out.

Having explored these literatures on the historical representations of childhood, whether referring to the Arièsian version, the Dionysian 'little devils', the Apollonian 'angels' or the tabula rasa, it is clearly evident that these understandings of childhood are largely influenced by adult preconceptions. Seen from these perspectives, Kellet *et al*. (2004:28) notes that the emphasis in historical perceptions also assumes the child to be a human "becoming rather than being" or as a preparation stage for adulthood. This representation of childhood as becoming adult resonates in the natural/biological view which perceives childhood in universal stages rather than as a social construct shaped by factors such as their age, gender, race and experiences. The debates on the difference between the studies of childhood as a natural/biological construct (immature until adult age) and as a social construct (as persons in their own right) will be discussed in the next section.

Overall, one thing that should be noted is that Ariès' work is an important intervention in childhood studies that has generated a revolution in the way childhood is being studied. Ariès' work has been extremely influential and has allowed childhood to be perceived in a critical way, attracting increasing international attention and generating new ideas about children and childhood (Freeman, 1983; James and Prout, 1990; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Aitken, 2001a; Skelton, 2001; Katz, 2004; Robson, 2004; Kesby *et al*., 2006). Building on these new ideas of childhood, the next section focuses on discourses regarding

images of childhood which have emerged.

2.2.2   Academic Perspectives of Childhood

Mayall (2001), notes that a variety of academic disciplines have been involved in controversies between biological and social constructions of childhood. Disciplines such as developmental psychology, anthropology and sociology have dominated child research areas in the social sciences and have been pivotal in structuring the ways in which children are researched and theorised (Ansell, 2005; Kehily, 2009). These academic disciplines tend to view "children essentially as 'incomplete' and also 'incompetent' half-persons in the process of preparation for adult life, requiring 'socialization' as the main input from adults" (White, 2003:14). In general, developmental psychologists perceive childhood as a biological construct or merely as a preparatory stage for the critical phase of life, which is adulthood (Heywood, 2001). This construction of childhood is based on natural/biological growth and documented stages (Jenks, 1996/2005; Kehily, 2009) which begins at conception and continues through the life span. James and Prout (1990) argue that the psychological study of child development views childhood as a period of apprenticeship progressing from a universal and irrational behaviour to a universal and rational behaviour in adulthood. In that sense, "the child is portrayed, like the laboratory rat, as being at the mercy of external stimuli: passive and conforming … and is finally rewarded by becoming 'social', by becoming adult" (James and Prout, 1997:13).

One of the most influential psychological theories of childhood is Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development theory published in *The Principles of Genetic Epistemology* (1972). According to Piaget (1972:5), "all knowledge is continually in a course of development and of passing from a state of lesser knowledge to one which is more complete and effective". Piaget argues that a child's knowledge changes over the course of their development through stages of thought processes from infancy to adulthood. Although Paget's work has been influential in the theorization of childhood, critics such as James and Prout (1990) have argued that these assumptions also suggest that Piaget's development stages marginalize children by perceiving them as a biological phenomenon, awaiting the acquisition of cognitive skills to enter into the social world of adults. Ansell (2005) also argues that the development stages identified in Piaget's work are drawn from the western tradition and empirically unreliable. Piaget's work can also be criticized because it generalises childhood as a universal process experienced in the same way by

every child and perceives all children as falling into the same strata categories, irrespective of their experiences.

Work in anthropology can be critiqued along similar lines; here too children have been studied as adults-in-the-making, needing socialization by adults through sets of norms and customs. Weisner (2001) asserts that anthropologists have a long history of perceiving children as learners when studying agents of socialization through institutions such as marriage and families. An interesting example comes from anthropologist Margaret Mead's studies on cross-cultural variations. During the 1920s, Mead's study on cultural influences revealed that these cross-cultural variations have significant impacts and can shape childhood environments. Her results reveal that children brought up in different cultures had different experiences. While her research deviates from the psychological orientations and biological perceptions such as Piaget's stages (which are thought to be universal), Mead's study was not on children specifically but on the influences of cultural settings on children. In light of this, it can be argued that Mead's study adopted an adult-centric perspective while reporting findings relating to children. As indicated by several authors, adopting an adult-centric perspective while studying children conceptualises children as incompetent and findings are significantly associated with adult's voices rather than those of the children explored (Oakley, 1994; Christensen and James, 2000).

Such adult-centric perspectives are also noticeable among sociologists. Qvortrup (1987:3), for example, observes that while there is a plethora of sociological discussions on "children's problems and problem children", the areas of children's lives and experiences based on children's accounts have been given little attention. Kellet *et al*. (2004) add that sociological approaches are often preoccupied with the structure of families and the roles of women, while the study of children in their own right has largely been ignored. Drawing from this argument, Hill and Tisdall (1997) opine that in the 1970s and 1980s, sociologists were still concerned with how adults perceived children within families or households for the purposes of statistical information and little attention was given to children themselves. Thus, for example, within Parsons' (1971) work on social systems, families function as social structures to sustain society and internalize children. In that regard, families must continue to change as societies change and this process is needed to socialize the child into the adult society. Clearly then, the traditional view of sociologists considers children as incomplete or as mere objects in the processes of socialisation that form part of their

transition into adulthood.

Other scholars such as Schildkrout (2002:248) have also argued that the weakness with the traditional view of sociologists is that children are assumed to be dependent variables that require "successful" socialisation from independent variables (adult) otherwise they become deviants in cases of "failed" socialisation. Against that backdrop, Schildkrout pointed out that children should not be viewed as a rehearsal for adult life or as passive actors within the processes of socialisation, rather, children should be perceived as social actors within society. Schildkrout reaffirms the active competency of children by drawing on her own studies which focused on Hausa society in Nigeria. Importantly, Schildkrout's findings were able to demonstrate that children's active economic role helps to sustain religious institutions amongst the Hausa women in purdah. As a result of the Islamic ideology, women in purdah are generally confined to their households forcing them to be dependent on children for virtually all social and economic activities outside their households. Schildkrout maintains that this significant evidence challenges the perception of children as vulnerable, passive and dependent.

Schildkrout, of course, is not alone in this assumption that children should be studied as social actors in their own right. From the 1980s there have been a growing number of theorists and researchers challenging the adult-centred frameworks of sociological and social anthropological studies of childhood and calling for a new focus on children's lives and experiences and their rights as social actors within society (Qvortrup, 1987; Ansell, 2005). Spurred by this shift in the theoretical approach towards childhood, the 'new' sociology of childhood emerged.

2.2.3   'New' Sociology/Social Studies of Childhood

Towards the end of the twentieth century a critique developed of the way in which social science literature had tended to portray children as passive bearers of socialisation and objects of study rather than giving attention to their views as expressed by them (Qvortrup *et al*., 1994; Corsaro, 1997; James and Prout, 2001; White, 2003). As noted by James and Prout (1997:4) "the traditional consignment of childhood to the margins of the social sciences or its primarily location within the fields of developmental psychology and education is, then, beginning to change: it is now much more common to find acknowledgment that childhood should be regarded as a part of society and culture rather

than a precursor to it; and that children should be seen as already social actors not beings in the process of becoming such". According to James and Prout, the new sociology of childhood proposes an emergent paradigm for childhood to be perceived as a social construction rather than a natural/biological construct. By this, the 'new' studies suggest that the study of childhood should engage children as social actors worth studying in the sphere of sociological analysis.

The new sociology and other approaches which have stemmed from it have strongly influenced the approach adopted within this thesis. It conceives of childhood as a highly eventful and unique period of life that is different from adulthood, and, perhaps even more importantly for this thesis, it contends that childhood experiences are shaped by varied images of class, gender, race and place (Nicholson, 2001). Consequently, children's experiences will differ between social classes, ages, ethnic groups and gender (Ansell, 2005). Recognising that the competence of children as social actors is an essential theme in the new sociology, the approach continues to gain momentum within the academic domain and international policy discourses (Hutchby and Morgan-Ellis, 1998; Holloway and Valentine, 2000). For instance, in more recent times, contemporary geographical researchers concerned with the ways in which children's everyday lived experiences are socially and spatially structured have latched onto the new approach (Qvortrup, 1987; Skelton, 2007).

One of the central arguments of this new sociological approach was that traditional sociological approaches drew their accounts of children's lives from adult voices rather than relying on children's voices (Tisdall, 2012). One of the implications of this renewed interest in children's voices, was that children who were normally excluded, such as disabled children (see Holt, 2004), have been given opportunities to narrate their experiences in a particular domain (James and Prout, 1990; Henrick, 1997; Tisdall, 2012). According to Prout, (2002:71), children are "keen, constructive and thoughtful commentators on their everyday lives at home, at school" and accessing information about children's lives through their own voices is key to understanding childhood. The focus on children's voices also clearly suggests that the new approach seeks to understand children not as innocent or incompetent (Hutchby and Morgan-Ellis, 1998), as often portrayed by psychologists, but as active actors who constitute a social group that can competently construct their own identities (Mayall, 2001; Tisdall, 2012).

However, the ideas of the new sociological approach have not been without criticism. Critics have argued that the social construction of childhood undermines the significant roles that biological and psychological influences play in the construction of childhood. De Cecco and Elia (1993), for example, assert that the social constructionist approach portrays the individual as a hollow entity lacking consciousness and intention whose actions are shaped by culture and society. They are of the view that biological influences are keenly important in the lives of individuals and that in itself precedes cultural influences and undermines the powers of cultural impacts. Observing this constraint, the new studies suggest that while there are biological and physiological influences that shape children's lives, the way in which the immaturity of a child is interpreted and understood is "a fact of culture" which varies in a social institution (James and Prout, 1990:7).

Other critics have highlighted the problematic way in which the issue of age has been dealt with. Lee (1998) argues that, if children are viewed as competent, then there may be no need for the supporting roles of adults to make them sociologically significant. In response to this, advocates of the new sociology have pointed out that chronological age may be of little use when studying childhoods across different cultures and societies (James and Prout, 2001). This argument derives from the fact that studies exploring experiences of children of the same age may find that a 9 year old may be attending school in one society and another working in different society. Nevertheless, whilst conceding children's ages may be of limited importance as a variable when studying childhoods across societies; it is surely an oversimplification to suggest that the issue of relative age among children is of 'little use' as James and Prout (2001) put it. In most African societies, for example, the age of a child is highly significant; although this is relative rather than chronological.

To make the point clearer, in Schildkrout's (2002) study among the Hausa peoples of northern Nigeria, she argues that while parents sometimes may not know the ages of their children, it was crucial that they know which child is older. By this, age mates are determined, certain tasks are apportioned, and younger children are expected to respect older children and adults. Furthermore, it would appear that in Cheney's (2005) study on the impacts of war on Ugandan children, the author maintained that younger children are a target of rebel soldiers because of their ages. The age of a child was identified as crucial mainly since, once in the forest, it is more difficult for younger children unlike older children to find their way home or try to escape.

Additionally, the new studies places more emphasis on a child's competences than its age mainly as developmental approaches which define a child based on age categorisation tend to place children's competencies as lower than those of adults. By identifying with children's competencies, the 'new' social studies propose that it is important to adopt a 'least-adult' role while studying children (Mandell, 1991). This means that in age-based power relations "all aspects of adult superiority except physical differences can be cast aside, allowing the researcher entrée to the children's world as an active, fully participating member" (Mandell, 1991:39). We could add that while the age distinctions between children are significant, the role of adults is to recognise children as competent active social agents in their own right. As argued by Hutchby and Moran-Ellis (1998:8), children should not be viewed "as the objects of overarching social processes by which they move from non-adults to being adults" but as already possessing social competencies.

On the basis of the above discussion, this thesis is situated within the paradigm of the new studies. Specifically, this study, which focuses on children's voices, is of the view that perceiving childhood as a biological construct alone tends to conceptualise children as universal without social and cultural variance. Thus, this study adopts the preconception that childhood is a social construction and children's experiences will be understood in different ways in different societies. Going by this, this thesis is influenced by the understanding that children should be studied in their own right and in their own voice, not as perceived by adults.

Having established that there is a variation between perceiving childhood as a social or biological construct, a better understanding of childhood will be incomplete without a discussion of the children's rights discourse. The notion of children's rights is an issue that has gained significant international recognition over recent decades; leading, for example, to the establishment of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child with the aim of promoting children's rights (UNCRC, 1989). Although the new studies of childhood approach draws on divergent views from the UNCRC on how childhood is perceived and defined, it appears that the principles of the UNCRC clearly lend themselves to some of the key assumptions of the new sociological studies which insist that children should be recognised as having social rights in society and should be listened to.

The next section of the chapter now goes on to discuss the influential children's rights approach as constituting a global notion of childhood. In the pages which follow, it is

demonstrated that the focus on children's rights, particularly by the UNCRC, have influenced the historical development of children's rights in African societies. Discussions will also focus on the key academic debates about the UNCRC and the challenges faced in pursuing its fundamental principles, particularly in relation to African societies.

2.2.4 Global Childhood: Evolution of Children's Rights

The notion that a person has a right establishes a legitimate claim, although how this is applied is a subject of debate (Hill and Tisdall, 1997). For instance, the application of children's rights by the UNCRC emphasises that children should be perceived as a separate group needing special protection from adults. This is connected to the understanding that children are vulnerable to factors such as poverty, education and conflicts. Ennew and Milne (1990:22) explain this when they note that, as far as children are concerned, their "especial powerlessness intensifies their vulnerability to the effects of poverty: food, health, shelter…" Consequently, advocacy groups, rights groups and welfare activists have often sought to introduce measures aimed at safeguarding children from a violent society (Ennew, 2003). In congruence with this view, the criminal justice systems in most societies provide arrangements for children that are distinct from those provided for adults. Within these measures lies the framework of children's rights which perceives children as rights holders with adults accountable for these rights.

Reflecting on the discussions considered in the previous sections, it has been argued that the general notion of children's rights perceives children as 'defenceless' (Boyden and Levison, 2000:55), innocent, 'passive and vulnerable' (Ansell, 2005:35). Arguably, this perception is also linked to the biological construct which views children as immature, incompetent and universal. Furthermore, the notion of children's rights tends to be drawn from a disposition that evidently reflects Jenks' (1996) Apollonian image of the modern child where children are viewed as being born 'good' but requiring the responsibility of adults until they reach adulthood. By portraying children as 'defenceless', the perspective of the global notion of childhood grew out of the movement that children need protection from adult exploitation. Against this backdrop, the UNCRC, an international treaty, set out ideal standards to be aimed at by member states in many areas relating to children and childhood.

On the basis that the Convention has an almost universal ratification with the exception of

the United States and Somalia, the UNCRC (popularly known as the CRC) has become a model for global consensus on matters concerning children. However, prior to these children's rights measures, children had not been considered as needing separate attention. Consequently, early notions of children's rights were often embedded in the general concepts of human rights (Ennew and Milne, 1990). The first milestone reflecting children's need for special recognition was the '1919 Save the Children Movement', established by Eglantyne Jebb who witnessed and documented the impacts of World War 1 on children (MacPherson, 1987; Ennew and Milne, 1990). In 1923, the Save the Children Movement drafted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child which suggested that children required special care and attention. This Declaration, later known as the Geneva Declaration, was adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations in Geneva (Limber and Flekkoy, 1995). In 1945, the United Nations Organization was established to replace the League of Nations which had failed in its efforts to maintain peace in the face of the Second World War (UNOG, 2012). The UN took over the Geneva Declaration and asserted that states and their peoples are no longer a matter of private affairs but a matter of legitimate interest to the broader international community. As such, nations were urged to respect human rights and basic freedom for all (Bennet, 1987).

The UN took its first step towards declaring the importance of children's rights by inaugurating the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 1946. This establishment was specifically aimed at providing national support to ameliorate the devastation inflicted on children by World War II. By 1948, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established. In its declaration, it recognises childhood in Article 25, Paragraph 2 which states "Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection" (OHCHR, 1996-2012). Additionally, reflecting some perceived weaknesses in the adopted Geneva Declaration, a second draft of the Declarations on the Rights of the Child was produced within the same year echoing concerns with children and protection (OHCHR, 1996-2012). By 1959, member states of the UN adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child as the foremost international agreement on the fundamental principles of children's rights (UNCRC, 2008). UN Declarations, however, are based on moral agreements and are not enforceable when compared to UN Conventions which are legally binding. Nonetheless, the 10 principles of the 1959 Declaration were remarkable.

Specifically, the last principle of the 1959 Declaration recognizes that "mankind owes to the child the best that it has to give" (UNCRC, 2008). Twenty years after the 1959 UN Declaration, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed 1979 as the 'Year of the Child'. By this proclamation, countries were encouraged to focus attention on children's welfare and to perceive the child as a rights bearer (Bell, 2008). What followed from this proclamation and various international treaties was the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). However, whilst there were indications of perceptions of the child as an actor and rights bearer, like most early ideas on children, the principles of the UNCRC also suggest a sense of children as vulnerable and in need of special protection from adults.

The above discussion has provided a brief overview of the evolution of the UNCRC, however, despite the positive dimensions discussed above, owing to the complexities in theorising chronological age-categorisations, child-adult relations, and the ambiguities in exercising its interventions, particularly in non-western societies, a variety of authors have critiqued the actions of children's rights institutions and the perceptions which underlie them.

2.2.5 Complexities of the Global Notion of Childhood

Freeman (1992) argues that the ten principles set out by the 1959 Declaration did not acknowledge children with rights as individuals; rather they dealt with the responsibilities of adults as having a duty to protect them. Similarly, Lewis (1998) posits that while the principles of the CRC tend to recognise children as rights bearers, the same principles undermine that perception by providing that adults exercise these rights on their behalf. Several other authors have also given considerable thought to the debates surrounding children's rights and duty holders. Hill and Tisdall (1997: 23), for example, ask if the duty holder, which may be the parents or the state, cannot fulfil a particular right, does the child still have the right? That is, if the parents and the state are unable to meet a particular duty, the child may then be viewed as having a right in theory but not in practice. Research also indicates that these concerns can be addressed if the state provides an enabling environment for the parents or duty holders to exercise their roles and if children are also allowed to exercise their participatory rights in matters concerning them (UNICEF, 2011c).

Indeed, some of the concerns emerging from these debates have been taken into

consideration in more recent activities of child-related international agencies. To take but one example, 'child participation' has become the hallmark of children's rights approaches. This became evident during the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children held in May 2002, and research has also begun to focus on children's voices and perceptions (see UNICEF, 2003).

As noted in Chapter One, the UNCRC has also been criticised for its use of chronological age definitions of childhood. Scholars such as Hill and Tisdall (1997) have argued that the age criterion fails to recognise the significance of child competency as a factor in understanding where childhood begins and ends. Hill and Tisdall (1997) cited in Katz (2004) expound on this, by noting that in some societies children's economic activities often cut across age groups leaning towards adult responsibilities. While recognising the complexities of age categorisation, Skelton (2000) argues that it is apt to suggest that the ambiguity of identifying one as a child or an adult is mainly a problem in social research. She submits that in legislation and other social institutions such as schools, age is less problematic because age becomes prescriptive and a child is identified based upon the date of birth. On the other hand, however, Freeman (1983) argues that although age is only prescriptive in legislative issues, it is still problematic. Specifically, Freeman questions the arguments that are adduced to denying children the right to vote. As stated by Freeman (1983:1), ".... if fact it be that children lack foresight, given the capacity to make decisions they will make disastrous ones. But is this not the case with adults too?" In agreeing with Freeman, Stables and Smith (1999) maintain that some children exhibit mature dispositions and behave in a more responsible and rational manner than adults.

Hill and Tisdall (1997) point out that the main difference between the child and the adult can also be a factor of power. By this, they assert that children are constrained by limited choices, decisions and control which are often imposed by adults. We can, however, return to Freeman's rejection of the assumption that limited power characterises the child. This argument stems from his opinion that during the slave system in America, black South African adults were treated and regarded as children. Freeman notes that slaves were occasionally kept in lowly positions and under constant "paternal" supervision like children (1983:8). Thus, slaves were provided with limited power, control and resources, yet they did not fit into the concept of a child and in fact some white children certainly had power over them.

Some other authors such as Ansell (2005) and Rama and Richter (2007) have also argued that using chronological age does not always distinguish a child from an adult, particularly in African societies where adulthood is often based on factors such as marriage, rites of passage and childbearing attainments. This position is also strongly advocated by several authors such as Roche (1999) and Boyden and Levison (2000) who argue that age categorisation is fuzzy and not an ideal criterion, particularly as children are shaped by diverse experiences. Nevertheless, whilst using chronological grouping to define a child is problematic, the flexibility adduced to child definition applied by the UNCRC appears to address this problem to an extent by deliberately allowing an earlier age where majority is attained under the age of eighteen. In effect, as noted earlier in Section1.4, the UNCRC permits member states to determine an acceptable definition of childhood in accordance with their national legislations.

Other than the child age debates, critics also argue that the UNCRC's perception of childhood is based on the rationale that children represent a vulnerable category in need of special protection[3] because of their physical and psychological immaturity. As noted in the preceding section, the underpinning rationale of the CRC is drawn from a biological construct that conceives childhood as a 'universal' and 'immature' stage in need of protection from a harmful adult society (Ansell, 2005; Espey *et al*., 2010). Comparing the UN's modern framing of childhood (where children are separately visible) to the Arièsian version (where children were argued to have been invisible in the medieval era), Qvortrup (2005) asserts that one apparent paradox drawn from the UN approach towards childhood is that while children were not recognised as social actors in the medieval era, they were visible and part of public life whereas children in modern society belong to the private family and have become passive and invisible as they are increasingly secluded from the adult world, which is perceived as dangerous and destructive. Qvortrup's thinking is fundamental to the new sociology of childhood view that children are not merely human 'becomings' or immature beings but human beings with their own status and with particular views shaped by influences of class, gender, race and place, etc. (Skelton, 2000; Ennew, 2003; Katz, 2004).

Taking the argument further, social scientists have maintained that the UNCRC's ambiguous idea of childhood is western in orientation, mainly since it excludes the cultures

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[3] This is spelt out in the preamble of the CRC (UNCRC, 1989)

of non-western childhoods. In line with this, Seabrook (2001) argues that the UNCRC ignores the extended and joint families of the global South but it promotes a version of the western family which is already at an advanced state of dissolution. As Ennew and Milne states, in the west, "children are separated from adults, they go to school rather than work, they are not expected to take up responsibilities; they have special activities called play and special things called toys to play with" (1990: 8). There is then a strong argument that this global notion of childhood is peculiar to the west and not suitable in non-western countries where childhood faces survival challenges. In explaining this, Hill and Tisdall (1997) argue that the UNCRC's idea that children are vulnerable and should be separated from work but devoted to play has not succeeded in non-western cultures as it ignores the social dynamics of work as a part of children's lives and its influence in shaping the lives of children.

The perplexity, however, is that the UNCRC'S western conception of the child as small, innocent and in need of protection and play has been exported to non-western countries through the processes of globalization (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Ansell, 2005). According to Kaime (2009), while the UNCRC has good intentions, the promotion and protection of children's rights have often faced an uphill battle in providing protective measures for the African child due to the diversity of ethnicity, religion and cultural norms. Several authors also suggest that the western representation of childhood by the UNCRC is flawed in non-western societies because it fails to recognise the diversity of children of 'other worlds' (Seabrook, 2001), 'other' childhoods (Kesby *et al*., 2006) or 'unchildlike' behaviours (Aitken, 2001b). As put by Robson (2004), the UNCRC has failed to take into consideration the culturally-specific local understandings of childhood in Africa. Owing to these complexities, the agenda of the UNCRC rarely seems to thrive in non-western countries or at least with the objectives intended (James and Prout, 1997; Niewenhuys, 1998).

In spite of difficulties noted above which can pose problems in exercising the UNCRC principles, African nations have relied mainly on this international instrument when enacting policies to protect children's rights. Specifically, following the UNCRC of 1989 and the World Summit of 1990, African nations quickly established the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 1990. While, the ACRWC, popularly referred to as the Charter, has a related focus based on the principles of the UNCRC, the Charter differs by recognising the special circumstances of most African children as being

affected by hunger, armed conflicts and natural disasters as well as by cultural and traditional factors, etc.

Having established the first objective of this chapter, which aimed to explore debates on children and childhood in a global context, the next section focuses on African contexts. In particular, discussions will focus on the debates on children and childhood in African societies and how children's lives have been shaped by local and international forces.

2.3   African Context - Children's Rights

The African Charter, a derivative instrument from the UNCRC, was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in November 1999 (since 2001 legally known as the African Union) (Olowu, 2002; Kaime, 2009). Some authors have signified that, although the Charter has borrowed its ideologies from the CRC, it has, however, provided more protection measures for the African child facing threatening realities by recognising their socio-cultural and economic situations (Thompson, 1992; Chirwa, 2002). Notably, the preamble of the ACRWC, states that "the situation of most African children remains critical due to the unique factors of their socio-economic, cultural, traditional and development circumstances; natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation and hunger. And on account of the child's physical and mental immaturity, he/she needs special safeguards and care". Olowu (2002) also establishes that when compared to the Convention, the Charter is different by prohibiting (in Article XX11, 2) the recruitment of any child under the age of 18 into armed conflict as opposed to the Convention (in Article 38), which permits the recruitment of children above the age of 15. Another great strength of the Charter is that it proclaims its supremacy over customs, traditional, cultural or religious practices that are inconsistent with the rights, duties and obligations contained in the Charter (Chirwa, 2002).

Despite these strengths, the Charter has been criticised for many weaknesses. Chirwa (2002) argues that, while it is laudable that the Charter guarantees children several participation rights, the Charter has several clauses that can weaken the rights of children to freedom and participation. For instance, the right to exercise reasonable supervision over the conduct of their children in Article 10 may affect children's rights in decision making and freedom mainly since, in African societies, children are rarely allowed to contribute to discussions. Also, African traditional expectations tend to require older males, adults or

legal guardians to take decisions on behalf of children.

Olowu (2002) also notes the omission in the ACRWC of any provision for the protection of the unborn child which is similar to the principles of the UNCRC. The debates surrounding the status of the unborn infant have also been reflected in studies by scholars such as Bainham (2005), Hill and Tisdall (1997) and Head (2012)[4]. These authors argue that the exclusion of foetal rights which is also evident in the UK and the USA legislations adds to the complexity of where childhood begins and also complicates the legal status of abortion issues. To expound on this argument, by not recognising legal protections for the foetus, childhood is assumed to begin at birth, therefore a woman who aborts a child is not viewed as violating the rights of the unborn child. Head (2012) also notes that in the US Roe v Wade majority ruling of 1973, it was also argued that without the legal protection of an unborn child, when a pregnant woman is murdered it cannot be charged as double murder. At this point it is important to add that despite being signatories to the UNCRC and the ACRWC, countries such as Nigeria have domesticated the Nigerian Children's Rights Act (CRA) which makes provision for the protection of the unborn. This goes to reflect that member states or signatories can adopt children's rights in congruence with their own local cultural acceptance.

Certain writers such as Ennew and Milne (1990) also worry that the ideology of the African Charter, like the Convention is of a quarantined childhood and drawn from the notion that children are passive subjects totally dependent on adults. The African Charter like the Convention does not view children as social actors in their own right (Boyden and Levison, 2000). Perhaps more importantly, in spite of the ratification of the UNCRC and the African Charter by most African countries, findings from several studies have shown that the reality of protecting children's rights does not seem to have resulted in appreciable effects (Rwezaura, 1998; Chant and Jones, 2005; Cheney, 2005; Kesby *et al*., 2006).

The next section will look at studies that have focused on the lives of African children with the aim of understanding why these international treaties have faced difficulties.

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[4] In the Roe v. Wade majority ruling of 1973

2.3.1   African Childhoods: The Lives of Children

Having established that the conceptualisation of childhood is problematic; various authors have also declared that the notion of African childhoods, which is unique and diverse, is just as problematic. Ennew (2003:3) for example, commented that other than geographical classification, it is questionable to group a "Cairo shoeshine boy, a ten year old domestic servant in Lagos, an Afrikaans [sic.] school boy [and] an Ethiopian youngster herding camels under the same rubric as African Child". Evans and Holt (2011) also note that children's experiences are significantly influenced by a range of socio-cultural differences across rural and urban environments.

Despite this fact, there are underlying similarities reinforced by a range of authors signalling that children in the majority of Africa are surrounded by inherent ambiguities such as conflicts (Garbarino *et al*., 1991) and children are often expected to take up adult responsibilities before the age of 18 (MacPherson, 1987). To expound on this argument, while childhood studies in the west are often perceived with such representations as innocence (Valentine, 1997; Heywood, 2001), vulnerability (Kearns *et al*., 2003), asexuality and leisure space (McKendrick *et al*., 2000), people in Africa's regions are just as likely to associate childhood with street children (Ennew, 2003; Evans, 2006), migration (van Blerk and Ansell, 2006), child-headed households (Robson, 2004), HIV pandemic (Kesby *et al*., 2006) and child soldiers (Cheney, 2005).

In detailing the lives of modern African childhoods, one domain of research that has proved to be challenging when adopting the principles of the UNCRC is the phenomenon of 'child work/labour'. Focusing on family structures and children's work responsibilities, Baker and Panter-Brick (2000) distinguished between two childhoods: traditional and urban middle-class. They argue that the traditional childhood represents children from poor families who tend to work from early ages within and outside their homes while families from the urban middle-class idealise the view of childhood as 'free from work' and this view leans towards the dominant western model. This dominant western view by the UN however, advocates that certain patterns of child work in traditional childhoods can be termed as child labour. According to the UN, child labour is work that is likely to interfere with a child's education and development; labour that exceeds a minimum number of hours, labour that is hazardous; and/or labour performed by a child who is underage according to state legislation (UNICEF, 2009b).

In an attempt to control these variations, most social scientists interested in African children have often distinguished child work from children's labour patterns (Blanchet, 1996; Nieuwenhuys, 1996/1998; Seabrook, 2001; Robson, 2004). Seabrook notes that a dichotomy has been drawn between supporters of the western model of a labour-free childhood and the defenders of children's right to work, including by children themselves. Supporters of the UN western ideology, such as the ILO and the UNCRC, view children as passive and helpless objects, thereby advocating a labour-free childhood, while others such as Bonnet (1993) and Green (1998) argue that from the child's point of view, 'work' is a way of survival.

Focusing on the 'usefulness' of child work, Green argues that the poor economic systems in non-western countries tend to reveal that some work is better than not working, especially if a useful skill is being acquired. Thorsen (2005), focusing on children's work in south-eastern Burkina Faso, argue that apart from economic motives, some children make decisions to migrate in order to acquire new skills such as shoe-shinning and petty trading. However, Green problematizes child work by arguing that without appropriate regulatory measures, poor working conditions, such as using dangerous machines in factories, can pose damaging threats to children. Similarly, Bonnet (1993) cautioned that attention should be focused on the type of child work, its suitability and efficiency for the family rather than work itself. Like Green, Seabrook (2001) also indicates that the useful skills that children acquire by working can help to alleviate the poverty of their families and offer them an opportunity for self-determination and responsibility.

However, expounding on the problems of child work, a 2006 UNICEF report claims that working children do not only miss out on education but the demands of work further exacerbate the cycle of poverty. Concerns over the discourse linking child work and child education have been examined by various social scientists, within which the stand of UNICEF has been challenged. For instance, Chant and Jones (2005) maintain that while it is undeniable that work takes a child away from attending school, work also provides some children with their only means of attending school. By this they mean that, given the poverty level amongst many families, some children legitimise their claim to work as the only means to generate income which will provide for their uniforms and books. Based on a study by Chant and Jones (2005) on youth poverty in the Gambia, it was discovered that the transition from education to work, work to poverty alleviation is often misplaced where

education in African societies often requires work for financial and other reasons. In a sense, their findings suggest that the claim that educational training opportunities will remove more children from poverty is paradoxical.

Seabrook (2001) supports Chant and Jones's thesis by arguing that the UN's assertion that a labour-free childhood will ultimately result in breaking the poverty cycle in African societies is a tall ambition which will take a long time to accomplish. He suggests that, rather than the UN clamouring for a labour-free childhood, it would be more pertinent to deal with the issues of poor educational systems and the underlying rationality of children's work - as their labour contributions in African families provide a means of survival often lost in the formal sector. Drawing on this point, Bonnet (1993) suggests that children may be better off in a work environment, where they are trained and their skills are developed, than in a poorly-constructed school environment with dilapidated and overcrowded classrooms where there are often no books, no blackboards and to which there is no transportation.

Seabrook also challenges the framework of the UN, which he argues tends to suggest that school is synonymous with western teaching and western knowledge. He maintains that UNICEF's idea of school fails to appreciate knowledge gained from children's cultural environment. To explicate this argument, Seabrook details the story of a twelve year old girl in Mahrashtra, India who knew the uses of hundreds of shrubs, trees, flowers and roots in her environment. According to Seabrook, "she knew where to find medicines against diarrhoea, leaves that would stop bleeding, how to locate cures for snake bites, fevers, swellings and sickness. She could identify fruits, roots and leaves for food. She knew where to find fodder, which wood had a high calorific value for cooking, how to make ropes from creepers. She knew how to build a cool weather-proof house. She knew where to find oil seeds that could be used to make a slow-burning lamp. She could prepare the rice fields before the monsoon and catch fish by using powdered bark that stunned them as they swam into her hands. She could trap rabbits, quail and other birds to supplement the family diet. She wore an old cotton dress discoloured by age; she went without shoes". Seabrook argues that while the child may not have attained western education, she displayed a considerable level of intelligence developed within her environment. However, on the yardstick of UN development index measurement, her literacy would be perceived as poor.

By focusing more on the role of children as social actors and young carers in Zimbabwe, Robson (2004) also critiques the notion of child work/labour as recognised by the UNCRC and the ILO. Robson evidenced that children's role as young carers are 'invisible' since they do not fit into the nomenclature of exploited child workers labouring in factories in the global South. Her findings show that, from an early age, children are entrusted with home-care duties as part of the social reproduction of African culture. However, as a result of the adverse economic circumstances, children's labour has become significant to the social economy in Zimbabwe. Particularly with the HIV/AIDS explosion in Harare, children's roles have been reshuffled to include heading households and caring for sick relatives of their households who cannot cope with household struggles through illness. By touching on the denial of children's hidden unpaid labour, Robson supports the idea that eliminating child work in African societies is not feasible as, for example, the erosion of the local representation of childhoods has reproduced young carers in Zimbabwe who work to contribute to family survival. Robson's study provides further evidence of the limited applicability of universal discourses on children's rights which emphasise childhood as 'carefree and protected' from the demands of labour.

While agreeing that 'universal models' of childhood fail to recognise other childhoods in the global South, Kesby *et al.* (2006) also suggest that Robson's arguments fall short of adequately conceptualising the new reality of childhood. Kesby *et al.* (2006), drawing on Robson's work, differ from Robson by arguing that the experiences of young carers are 'other' to the 'other' childhoods, as they neither fit neatly with the global definitions of childhood, nor do they fit into a culturally specific localised understanding of childhood. In explaining this, Kesby *et al.*, suggest that under normal circumstances, local conceptualisations would make child-headed households impossible because by tradition, children and women's proper place in the customary socio-spatial hierarchy was under the guardianship of a male leader, while orphans and widowed wives often inherited. However, there has been a shift in these responsibilities, particularly as victims of HIV/AIDS are not often inherited by elders or relatives due to stigmatisation or the burden of caring for them. The result therefore, is that young carers are burdened with the role of heading the households.

Similarly, Skovdal *et al.*'s (2009) study also supports the argument that the quest by international agencies to recognise culturally-specific local understandings of childhood is

in some sense misdirected. Skovdal *et al*.'s study revealed the gradual erosion of the traditional gendered responsibilities for children as a result of the damaging effect of HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Their study showed that in Kenya's 'Luo' it was not culturally traditional for boys to engage in cooking and domestic activities, however, boys now engage in these household activities as part of their roles in caring for their sick and stigmatised HIV/AIDS relatives. Mirroring Kesby *et al's* line of argument, Skovdal *et al* contends that both global and local definitions of childhood have weaknesses that conceal the experiences of children, which are 'other' to 'other' childhoods. As shown in the later sections of this study, other interventions such as colonial and post-colonial influences have also significantly altered the realm and the pattern of traditional African childhoods to create 'other' to 'other' childhoods.

Another social phenomenon that exposes the difficulties of the UNCRC in African societies is the impact of war on children's lives. Scholars such as Cheney (2005) argue that an ideal construction of African childhood was one where children were cared for by elders or parents and by evenings where children listened to folk tales told by parents or relatives. However, Cheney asserts that in Ancholi in Uganda, years of post-independence civil war and ethnic discrimination have destabilised the peaceful society. According to Cheney, during the civil war, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels abducted over 14,000 children as servants, child soldiers and sex slaves (in the case of the girls) in a bid to overthrow the new government. Refusal or disobedience by these children meant death, or to be beaten with logs and burned with matches by the LRA.

With the abductions and terror, there has been a loss of culture as 'normal' life. Rather, childhood has been replaced with fear and silence, while parents are lamenting the fate of intergenerational relationships. In a bid to protect children's lives, the UNICEF established an age-based rehabilitation programme for returnee child soldiers. However, drawing on the age-based definition of a child; the UN programme discriminated against children above the age of 17. Cheney's study challenged the child/adult boundaries that separate a child soldier from an adult soldier simply because one is below the age of 18. She argues that by this age categorisation, children who were abducted before their 18th birthday and were rescued after they passed 18 years of age are automatically beyond UNICEF's jurisdiction.

Cheney also criticises UNICEF's perception of children as 'innocent' by asking "how can children be considered innocent but still culpable for the violence they perpetrate?" (2005:37). To explicate this, she notes that successfully-trained child soldiers are made to believe that killing their enemies or other children shows strength, while being soft or emotional is weak. As a result, child soldier returnees face stigmatisation and are often viewed with contempt and distrust in their communities because of their involvement with the LRA. Cheney concludes by arguing that the influence of war on child soldiers presents another form of childhood where children are perceived as 'generational threats'. By problematizing the UN ideology of childhood in African societies, Cheney argues like Kesby *et al*. that the childhoods of child soldiers rarely seem to fit into the globalised or local cultural understanding of childhood.

Further literature on African childhoods which reflects the complexity of the UNCRC's ideology is the pandemic of street 'children'. Evans's (2006) study of Tanzania's street children and how they negotiate their environments revealed that, contrary to the UNCRC and other dominant perspectives which often maintain that the family home is the best place for proper childhood, some abused street children would rather continue with life on the streets, which places them at extreme risk, than return to an abusive home. Drawing from the 'new' studies of childhood, Evans posits that although street children are often perceived as lacking 'childhood' by international agencies, street children are competent social actors who actively construct their identities by choosing to live on the streets.

Other scholars have also emphasised that perceiving street children as social 'misfits' or 'hapless victims' in need of help fails to recognise their dynamism and competence in coping with their unique circumstances (Panter-Brick, 2000; Ennew, 2003; McFadyen, 2004). Such constructions of childhood as 'victimhood' are embedded in the dominant western image of the child as 'weak, innocent and in need of protection' (Boyden, 1997). Developing this further, Ennew (2003) suggests that the key to understanding the lives of children on the streets lies in understanding the lives and roles of children in their culture. For example, in India, one of the problems associated with street children is the dynamics of the community, the family and the caste system (Raman, 2000) while in Dakar, street children are associated with armed conflict (Ennew, 2003). While agreeing with Ennew that street children are social actors, it is also important to recognise, as suggested by Hecht (1998), that to understand a problem, one must understand the culture and dynamics

of the problem. For instance, Hecht asks why all poor African children are not living on the streets if poverty is the problem with African street children? In other words, to understand streetism amongst poor children, it is imperative to understand the community and unmask the peculiarity of each child's circumstance.

The above discussions have illuminated the diverse difficulties that characterise African childhoods and why some of the practices of the UNCRC have failed to integrate perfectly within African societal structures. Despite the wide complexities, one central theme that has reoccurred in these studies is the argument that modern African childhood has evolved from a traditional phase to a modern phase. This is also synonymous with the Arièsian perspective reviewed earlier, which argues that childhood has evolved from a medieval era to a modern era. However, what is clear from studies of African childhood is that, unlike the case of western childhoods, which it is argued have evolved from a negative traditional perception of childhood to a positive modern one, in Africa the transition described is from a positive traditional perception of childhood to a negative modern conception.

Some of the reasons behind this are the influences of colonial and post-colonial processes on African childhoods. For example, Kesby *et al*. (2006:189) assert that the "forces of industrialization and modernization" have introduced socio-cultural influences which have shaped the current production of childhoods. Just like Kesby *et al*., Evans (2006) also argues that the new socio-spatial relation in African children is an outcome of the macro-economic and political context of colonialism, urbanisation, structural adjustment and globalisation, which have been exported to Africa by the West. From a similar direction, Cheney (2005) also posits that the change in African childhoods has its root in colonial periods hence having both national and local explanations.

There appears, then, to be a common acceptance of the influences of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial interventions on African childhoods. In that regard, the next section will attempt to review some of the literatures on these issues. This broad discussion will help provide a route for exploring the lives of children in the Nigerian context which will be discussed later in this chapter.

2.3.2   African Childhoods: Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-colonial Impacts

According to Grinker and Steiner (1999), one of the many paradoxes of discussing pre-colonial childhoods is that it imposes a consideration of multiple positions, which has

stimulated questions about the author's perspective and ideology. For instance, while detailing the lives of the South African Venda children, Blacking (1964) stated that "children need never feel apart from the mainstream of Venda society because there is no separate children's world: they are junior adults, who take part at the earliest age in activities related to the realities of the adult world. Thus, little boys of four or five go out herding, and become involved in a separate micro-society which operates within the larger framework of Venda society" (1964:31-32). This extract, according to Grinker and Steiner, has profound ramifications for the idea of western childhood because a critical reading of that text tends to reveal much more about Europeans than Africans. Rwezaura (1998) supports Grinker and Steiner's view by adding that for Africans, this so-called 'separate children's world' is depicted as a period for child training and socialisation, to learn and obtain skills for future adulthood, which includes play and innocence but is not free from child work. Ottenberg (1965) also submits that, contrary to Blacking's assertions of 'no separate children's world', African childhood was a definite stage separate from adulthood prior to colonisation and there often exist ceremonies that define the passage from childhood to adulthood.

Upon further review, the extant literature on African pre-colonial childhoods reveals that children were regarded as adult 'becomings' that need socialisation. Kpone-Tonwe, (2001) indicated that among the Ogoni tribe of Nigeria, childhood provided a means of steady recruitment and training of junior adults for the defence and the preservation of societal traditions. During this stage, Radcliffe-Brown (1970) points out that children are part of public life and are not confined to the privacy of a family. Gulliver (1965) also wrote that children in the Jie of Uganda are socialised into becoming adults by learning some duties, such as girls of five or six years old assisting their mothers in the kitchen while boys of six and seven go out herding the goats. In a similar vein, Read (1959) noted that, traditionally, children are also taught good habits such as kneeling to greet their parents and are expected to show obedience to elders.

To transit from childhood to adulthood, scholars such as Southwold (1965) argue that children go through different socialisation processes or rites of passage. In the case of girls, marriage and first menstruation separates a child from an adult. It was also noted by Ottenberg (1965) that while marriage and clitoridectomy signified the assumption of adulthood for girls within the communities of Afikpo of Eastern Nigeria, a boy's admission

into adulthood was initiated through passage rites involving courage and bravery. Evidence was also offered that among the pygmies of Congo, activities such as killing an antelope or fighting their way armed through women armed with sticks and stones mark a boy's recognition into adulthood (Ottenberg, 1965).

Within the pre-colonial period, traditional African societies also saw the emergence of the slave trade. During this time, as early as the thirteenth century, Portuguese traders opened up trade routes in central southern Africa (Seabrook, 2001) and by the late 1800s, Europeans had established trading activities (beads and leather and slaves) with Africa. Nunn (2006) notes that within the slave trade era, the African continent experienced four simultaneous slave trades: the trans-Saharan, Red Sea, Indian Ocean and the trans-Atlantic. However, with the abolition of slave trading in the nineteenth century, European colonizers moved in to establish their control over Africa and there began a 'scramble for Africa' in which different European nations, namely, Belgium, Holland, Portugal, Germany, France and Britain sought to carve up Africa as integral parts of their empires (Young, 1982). Several studies, such as Herbst (2000) noted that the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 made decisions that helped to formalise and partition the African continent, with France and Britain controlling the largest areas.

By signing treaties with African chiefs, the colonial rulers constructed borders and superimposed their colonial powers over Africa's culture and regions (Uzoigwe, 1985). While colonial rule lasted from the 1880s to the 1900s, it had a profound impact on the present and future lives of all Africans (Grinker and Steiner, 1999). In particular, the economic and social changes produced during colonial rule greatly altered Africa's traditional societies. As described by MacPherson (1987), the training and welfare of the child which was initially performed as a collective task by immediate and extended families became less and less able to cope with the demands put upon it. A typical case is the African education system which, prior to colonialism, was such that children were initiated into a traditional way of life through participation in production normally shared amongst other children. With colonialism, this traditional education process gave way to a school system, where certificates must be earned to guarantee a civil service job. In general, not only did colonialism alter the image of African childhood, but so also did the end of colonialism.

As Europe's colonial powers withdrew, some African societies hybridised their traditional cultures with European cultures, while others simply adopted European cultures. For example, as newly independent countries continued with the educational systems of their colonizers, gaining educational certificates became a big challenge. Worse still, the certificates were no longer a promise of employment or income. According to Seabrook (2001), as countries integrated themselves into the global economy, the social costs of economic adjustment resulted in social disintegration with more broken families, more working women and more children forced into the labour market. In a further exacerbation of the problems of the post-colonial era, MacPherson (1987) argues that the structural adjustment programmes adopted by African nations in the 1980s, forced families to send their children to work as a means to survive rather than emancipating people from poverty. For instance, in many major African cities such as Lagos (Nigeria) and Dandora (Kenya), more children have ended up rummaging on the rubbish sites, and have entered the sex trade, to service an endless debt incurred from the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) programmes (Seabrook, 2001).

Perhaps it is useful here to explore, albeit briefly, the general impacts of the SAP on the evolution of African economies. In the 1970s, as Africa moved towards democracy, economic independence and nation building, African leaders borrowed money to fund domestic projects hoping to repay their debt with earnings from exports. By the end of the 70s, many African countries were struggling with economic difficulties, inflation, fiscal deficits and poor economic growth compared to population growth. Authors such as Prempeh (2006) pointed to the oil price shock of 1973, changes in the external environment - a collapsing demand for exports, worsening terms of trade and rapid increases in interest rates - which caused commodity prices to fall and, as a result, countries found themselves with huge debt repayments. What followed was disastrous as Rono (2002) illustrates using the Kenyan economy. According to Rono, with the 1973 increase in oil prices, Kenya's economy fared for the worse, characterised by features such as food shortages, low GDP, drought, famine, high debts and the prevalence of poverty and diseases, children from poor families particularly suffered.

In a bid to address the economic difficulties, African governments adopted SAPs, a loan programme coordinated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The SAPs which were meant to encourage efficient use of resources and to ensure debt

repayment and economic restructuring also involved loan conditions for African countries such as privatization of public services, currency devaluation, cuts in public spending on health, education and welfare services, massive retrenchment of workers and policies for wage control while prioritizing debt repayment policies (Chossudousky, 1997; Pearce, 2000).

Pearce (1989) captures the devastating conditions facing African economies during this period. He explains how in Nigeria the government diverted funds from health and other social service sectors to service external debt repayments. The result of which was a deteriorating medical care system and an increase in health risks such as malnutrition, malaria and diarrhoea affecting the populace but with a particularly strong impact upon children.

Similarly, in Zambia, the charity Oxfam reports that external indebtedness and SAP restructuring has taken its toll as the government increased school fees while spending on education has been cut. The report also indicated that the country pays more servicing its international debt than it does on health and education combined (BBC News, 2000). In furtherance, Pearce stated that rather than the SAPs ushering in an improvement, Africa's economies deteriorated and by the end of the 1990s, Africa's debt had grown from US$6 billion in 1970 to a staggering US$300 billion in 1993. Per capita income had fallen from $860 (1982) to $290 (World Bank, 1984; UNICEF, 1991) and the standard of living had plummeted. Generally, many authors have argued that, to a large extent, African government policies directed by the SAPs of the IMF and external indebtedness have handicapped the commitment of governments to the protection of children (Bonnet, 1993; Seabrook, 2001).

Drawing on these reports, it would appear that international debt became a new form of slavery for African people with governments diverting funds for healthcare and education to debt repayments. Nevertheless, while not overlooking factors such as the historical impact of the slave trade, European colonialism and SAPs, political economists including Meredith (2006) also blame internal corruption and the failure of African leaders to provide effective governance for their nations. To amplify this, Meredith argues that many government activities such as decisions regarding economic planning, social policy legislation, justice, health, education, youth policy and environmental developments, etc.,

have not been in the interests of children, rather, ruling powers are more interested in self-enrichment. Taking a cursory look at the case of Nigeria clearly illustrates this point.

As of 2005, Nigeria had a debt stock of $22.2 billion and its debt external service was at $8.8 billion. However, statistics from the World Bank and UNDP 2006 reports revealed that Nigeria received an overall debt reduction of $18 billion in 2005. This debt relief not only contributed to the build-up of foreign reserves and increased government's revenue but also allowed for a large fiscal surplus both in terms of reversing the budget deficit which had dominated government budgets for several years (UNICEF, 2011c). However, even with the positive implications of the debt relief over that period, UNICEF's evaluation of child-related policies during this period shows that there was very little progress in converting the enlarged resource base to meeting the basic needs of children (UNICEF, 2011c).

According to the UNICEF (2011c) report, on paper, it appears that the 2005 debt relief to Nigeria had some improvements in the government's expenditure on health, education and child-protection services. Notably, the proportion of national income spent on health expanded (the health budget as a proportion of national income was 3.98 %, 5.63% and 5.37% in 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively); education spending also increased (6.67 %, 8.80% and 8.19% in 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively). Nevertheless, child-protection services got about 0.1% in each of the three years; while social protection (price subsidies, petroleum support fund etc.) accounted for 4.2% and 3.2% of the total budget in 2005 and 2007 respectively. The report revealed that the budget, in general, did not pay adequate attention to child-related issues.

Another 2010 report which reviewed child-related Nigerian Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) showed that very little progress was being made in meeting targets in eradicating hunger and poverty, reducing child mortality and protection from HIV/AIDs and malaria, and increasing access to sustained sources of water and sanitation. While noting that some African countries received debt relief to assist their economies, Prempeh (2006) was still highly critical when he argued that none has had its entire debts cancelled and more is still spent on debt servicing than on education and healthcare. Despite this assertion by Prempeh, and beyond the servicing of loans and other external difficulties, it is clear that factors such as corruption and poor commitment to child-related matters in nations such as Nigeria are major factors affecting the poor state of children's lives. The

argument here is that while African governments such as that of Nigeria have imbibed the notions of the UNCRC, in reality it appears these states are not entirely devoted to enhancing children's access to these rights. This argument will be developed in the next section.

Discussions under the African context perspective, have so far explored the challenges of adopting the agenda of the UNCRC in various African contexts. Reviews of the relevant literatures have also established that the influence of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial factors have had a major, largely negative, impact on the conceptualisation of modern African childhoods. The literature also indicates that by implication Nigeria like other African countries has experienced a range of shared contemporary factors such as the impacts of SAPs. In the next section we move on to focus more directly on the lives of children in Nigeria. While the main objective of this thesis is to explore the lives of children in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, what the next section hopes to achieve is to explore the general context regarding the lives of children in Nigeria and their access to a range of rights in line with the objective of this thesis. Developing such an understanding is fundamental in providing a contextual background for exploring the distinct state of the lives of children in the Niger Delta region which will be elucidated later in the thesis.

2.4   Nigerian Context: The Lives of Children

According to the 2006 demographic statistics of the Nigerian census, the nation has a population of over 140 million people and nearly half of these (over 70 million) is represented by children under 18 years of age (NPC, 2006; UNICEF, 2011c). Like studies that focused on modern African childhoods more generally, studies on Nigerian childhoods, although very few, have focused largely on indices of child wellbeing, such as child health and survival (POLICY Project/Nigeria, 2002), child labour (Tojunde and Carter, 2007; Okafor, 2010), child education (Onu *et al*., 2010), child abuse (Okeahialam, 1984), street children (Aderinto, 2000), child poverty (Meludu, 2009; UNICEF, 2011c) and children's rights (Ayua and Okagbue, 1996). These studies have often presented children as 'passive' victims and they tend to share a broadly similar perspective that children face significant risks resulting from the poor state of socio-economic development in the nation and the nature of the development policies that have given rise to those circumstances.

Collective evidence from these literatures has also pointed to a perception that millions of Nigerian children are subjected to hazards ranging from disadvantage, discrimination, voluntary or forced employment, abuse and exploitation, sometimes in appalling hostile environments where their childhood is influenced by factors that severely limit their emotional, mental, physical and social growth and development. However, it is important to begin with a brief consideration of the evolution of children's rights in Nigeria.

2.4.1   Framework of Children's Rights in Nigeria

Generally, human rights in Nigeria are set out in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Constitution equally allows for the Customary and the Shari'ah courts to cover a variety of issues and jurisdictions (Alemika, *et al*., 2005). Nonetheless, the welfare of the child has been recognized by law in Nigeria since 1943 when the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) was first enacted by the British colonial government (Ajomo and Okagbe, 1996). The CYPA was enacted to make "provision for the welfare of the young person and the treatment of young offenders and for the establishment of juvenile courts", a law relating primarily to juvenile justice (Alemika, *et al*., 2005:22). However, the CYPA fell short of a child-protection system that allowed for opportunities for the participation of children in matters that concern their rights and welfare (RCW, 2005). The CYPA was later revised and incorporated into Nigeria's federal laws in 1958, formerly Chapter 32 of the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria and Lagos (Ajomo and Okagbe, 1996).

In 1979, the protection of children was specifically entrenched in the Nigerian Constitution of that year which provided that "Children, young persons … [should be] protected against any exploitation whatsoever and against moral and material neglect". Section 18 of the 1979 Constitution equally enjoins the government to direct its policy towards ensuring equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels (Ajomo and Okagbe, 1996). During that period, the Nigerian government appears to have committed itself to global initiatives promoting the rights of the child by focusing on the education and health of children. For instance, free and compulsory primary education was adopted as a policy and training was intensified to improve health services and the equitable distribution of health facilities. Nevertheless, in 1989 education policies had constraints of poor funding, poor infrastructure, the high cost of education (both hidden and apparent), overcrowded

classrooms, early pregnancies and high dropout rates due to economic and socio-cultural factors (Afonja, 1996).

At the same time, the health status of the Nigerian child can hardly be said to be encouraging. According to the National EPI coverage survey in 1988, only 37.5% of children were fully immunised with considerable variation among the states and the least protected were those born to mothers with no education. In the same year, the National Health Policy and Strategy report also estimated that no more than 35% of the Nigerian population had access to modern healthcare services; the worst affected being rural communities and the urban poor (Federal Ministry of Health, 1988). Overall, several studies established that the outcome of the revised CYPA still fell short of its objectives (Afonja, 1996; UNICEF, 2009a).

As mentioned in preceding sections of this chapter, in an increased effort to safeguard children's rights, Nigeria became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991 and also a signatory to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 2001. While the Convention and the Charter are binding on member states, they do not have any legal force in Nigeria. This is mainly due to section 12 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution[5], which states that "no treaty between the Federation and any other country shall have the force of law except to the extent to which any such treaty has been enacted into law by the National Assembly". In other words, while children's rights are recognised in Nigeria, they cannot be enforced without adoption into law by particular states. Against this background, the Nigerian Child's Rights Act (CRA) was drafted and principally aimed at enacting into Law in Nigeria the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the AU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. However, the Bill could not be passed into law because of opposition from religious groups and traditionalists (Alemika *et al*., 2005).

The main objection to the CRA has been the provision setting of 18 years as the minimum age for marriage. This was said to be unsuited to religious and cultural traditions in various parts of the country, where 'girls' are given in marriage at a younger age. According to UNICEF (2002)[6], a special group was then set up to harmonize the children's Bill with

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[5] The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

[6] quoted in Integrated Regional Information Networks
(IRIN), Nigeria: Focus on the Challenge of Enforcing children's

Nigerian religious and customary beliefs. The Bill, providing for the rights and the responsibilities of children in Nigeria, as well as for a renewed system of juvenile justice administration, was rejected by the Parliament in October 2002 once more on grounds of its contents being contrary to Islamic values, traditions and culture (Alemika *et al.*, 2005). After ten years of debate by the parliamentarians, the Bill was eventually passed into Law by the National Assembly in July 2003 (UNICEF, 2007). It received the assent of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, in September 2003 and was promulgated as the Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003.

To reiterate from Chapter One, spurred by local and international advocacy for children's rights, the CRA has been promulgated into Law in 26 out of 36 Nigerian states including most of the states in the centre-south of Nigeria. Overall, the basic provisions of the Children's Rights Act can be classified under survival rights, development rights, participation rights and protection rights. These are crucial issues that, if adequately enforced, could help engender child's rights in the country. Unfortunately, this is not yet the case for a number of reasons, as will be discussed below.

2.4.2   Major Challenges to Implementing the CRA in Nigeria

Despite the promulgation of the CRA into Nigerian law, there are a series of major challenges to its administration and enforcement in Nigeria which are outlined in the following sub-sections.

2.4.2.1   Nigerian Legal Structure

Nigeria operates a presidential system of government in which there are three tiers of government, at the Federal, State and Local levels. The states and the local governments are in charge of the implementation of the national policy as defined and monitored by the federal authority. Nonetheless, each state has its own government, laws and judiciary. From this legal structure, the CRA needed to be adopted into state laws by each of the states of the Federation in order to become binding on that state. The problem and difficulty is that no court can prosecute violators of the CRA in states that have not enacted it. As under the Nigerian Constitution children's rights protection is the exclusive

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responsibility and jurisdiction of the states, thus the CRA is only applicable to the Federal Capital Territory, at the National level.

2.4.2.2 Religious and Gender Contentions

As noted earlier, one of the major challenges to the implementation of the CRA is opposition to the way in which the definition of a child is legislated, particularly in Northern Nigeria where Islam predominates. It is not surprising therefore that most of the Northern states in Nigeria have not adopted the Act (CRIN, 2011). By defining a child as anyone below the age of 18, the Act prohibits the betrothal and marriage of children and provides penalties for its infringement. However, according to the Shari'ah courts, which have been instituted in the mainly Islamic plurality states, the Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria (SCSN) permits the marriage of female children who have attained puberty regardless of the child's age.

Generally, puberty, as indicated by Sharia scholars, is as early as age 13 which in part translates in this view as the end of childhood. Further, the section of the CRA that relates to gender equality also runs contrary to the Shari'ah laws. According to the Shari'ah law, "any law that seeks to give equal rights to male and female children in inheritance, seeks to give an illegitimate child the same rights as the legitimate one, and establish a court (family court) that ousts the jurisdiction of Shari'ah courts on all matters affecting children, is unacceptable to Muslims" (*Daily Trust News,* 2005; Religion Clause, 2005). A UNICEF (2010) report also revealed that some states that have adopted the CRA tend to adopt a different definition of a child from that stated in the Act. These problems were noted and condemned during the 1505th and 1507th meetings of the CRC (CRC/C/SR.1505-1507) held on 26 May 2010, and its 1541 meeting, held on 11 June 2010 as one of the critical areas of concern. The same report also reveals the poor state of implementing and executing children's affairs and rights especially by the affected ministries and agencies.

2.4.2.3 Traditional Attitudes

Another significant barrier to the implementation of CRA goals is the nature of many traditional attitudes towards children within Nigerian society. In bringing up a child, social or welfare involvement by the state are quite minimal. Thus, the main support for the child's welfare is provided by the parents of the family (Akinwunmi, 2009). This control by the child's family enables them to make certain decisions relative to the children's

wellbeing such as schooling, religion and housing. What this means is that insistence on rights by any child, whether male or female, can often clash with the overriding interests and/or views of the family as determined by parents or guardians (Udoh and Edem, 2011).

In addition, while the CRA guarantees to children the right to express opinions and to have these opinions considered in matters affecting their well-being, matters such as the right to education or choice of religion are often subject to appropriate parental guidance. Also, it appears that most families disagree that children may express their views or opinions or even simply disagree with their parents. These behaviours are often regarded by parents/carers as disobedience and children are cautioned to desist from such behaviours (Owasanoye and Adekunle, 1996). The challenges posed by these traditional habits frustrate the practical execution of children's rights in Nigeria.

2.4.2.4 Sensitization and Awareness

In addition, the majority of the populace, particularly children, are not familiar with the Act or its composition. It then follows that the majority of the populace are not aware of what constitutes an offence and the penalties for infringing children's rights. Besides, from the perspective of Alemika *et al*. (2005), the judicial arm of government as well as the police force is yet to be fully sensitised on the principles of the CRA, thereby making enforcement and implementation of the CRA difficult. It would also appear from the literature reviewed that the poor state of the educational system in the country, particularly for children in the rural areas, suggests that the government has not provided an enabling environment which can help disseminate the contents of the CRA.

2.4.2.5 Prioritisation of Children's Interests

According to UNICEF (2011c), a major hurdle for the CRA is that child policies are often fused into broader initiatives. They argue that child-related matters are often juxtaposed with women's initiatives in the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD). A devastating result of this has been the diversion of policy execution from children's priorities. In the report, UNICEF explains that the Nigerian FMWASD was initially created as a National Commission for Women in 1990. By 1991, it was restructured as a Ministry with an added 'Department of Child Development' mandated to regulate and provide policy direction and guidance for over 70 million

children in Nigeria. This department therefore is responsible for child social services, children's rights promotion and child care and survival in Nigeria.

Perhaps more importantly, the department is assigned with the responsibility of enhancing the status of the Nigerian child through ensuring the implementation of international treaties such as the UNCRC and the ACRWC to which Nigeria is a signatory. Saddled with this new responsibility and the added CRA, the ministry required an increase in its budget allocation and specific children-oriented programmes for the promotion of children's rights through its National Child's Rights Implementation Committee. However, despite the Ministry's budgetary allocation to accommodate child issues, it has been suggested that the principal beneficiaries of the budget are women, while children and social development issues are supplementary (CRIN, 2010).

2.4.2.6 Poor Policy Environment

Another crucial challenge is that the Nigerian policy environment has tended to look impressive on paper, but in practice has been ineffectual and has probably served more of a political purpose with large and widespread corruption involving misappropriation of funds (POLICY Project/Nigeria, 2002; Alemika *et al*., 2005; Togunde and Carter, 2007; Eneh, 2011). Drawing on the prevailing history of development policies and plans, it was noted that successive Nigerian governments often condemn the policies of their predecessors and initiate their own policies. This builds on Stephen and Lenihan's (2007) influential argument that Nigerian governments have continually adopted the same formulas and policies which have robbed the poor, especially children, of any sustainable development plans. As a result, there is an abundance of failed and abandoned development programmes and at the end of a leader's tenure there is "no actualisation of the vision, no regrets for the failure, no review and no direction" (Eneh, 2011:63).

Not surprisingly, the UNICEF (2011c) report remarks that child programmes and policies have been faced with challenges of discontinuities and abandonment, instability, incoherence and loss of focus in spite of heavy financial and resource investment at the initiation of the development plans. In seeking to explore further reasons for policy failures in Nigeria, several studies points to the prevalence of corruption, weak mechanisms and unsustainable implementation patterns resulting from socio-economic and cultural factors (Saddiqui and Patrinos, 2001; Ahamba, 2011). It has also been emphasised that child-

related policies and programmes are plagued with weak policy monitoring and evaluation processes involving collection of quality data, statistical tracking, statistical analysis and translation of statistical results (Ayua and Okagbue, 1996; NPC/UNICEF, 2001).

2.4.2.7 Influence of Western Ideologies

While the CRA was established to set out the rights and responsibilities of a child in Nigeria, it was also meant to domesticate the principles enshrined in the UNCRC and the ACRWC as ratified by the Nigerian government (UNICEF, 2007). As noted in the FMWASD report, the 2003 CRA was designed to give legal effect to the commitment made by Nigeria under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (FMWASD, 2004). From this indication, it can be argued that the adoption of the UNCRC and the ACRWC, which has been criticized as being western in conception, may have contributed to the complexities of implementing the principles of the CRA. To take but one example, the definition of 'child work' by the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development is synonymous with the western definition of child work in international instruments such as the ILO Convention and the UN (See FMWASD, 2008). Consequently, it can be argued that the Nigerian Ministry has not taken into consideration a distinctive feature of Nigerian society where child work is inherently significant for poor family households. This argument is elaborated upon in Section 2.4.3.4 of this study.

Overall, drawing on the insights provided on the evolution and challenges of children's rights in Nigeria, the implementation and enforcement of the CRA in the states of the Federation is no doubt slowly functional. Under these conditions, children's access to basic rights remains weak and this weakness has significant negative impacts for those rights. Several reports have revealed that while the government has acceded to providing these basic rights to children, they are ill-equipped to deal with the effects of the policies. In order to understand how this has affected the lives of children in Nigeria, the next section will focus on children's access to selected rights.

2.4.3 Children's Access to Basic Rights

For the purpose of this study, the following sections will review literature on some of the prevailing issues associated with children's access to water, food, health, education, play spaces, shelter, and the practices of child labour. The information provided from these

reviews establishes a useful national framework for exploring children's lives in Nigeria, particularly as they strongly correlate to themes that are taken up in the empirical chapters of the thesis exploring the lived experiences of children within the Niger Delta region.

2.4.3.1 Water

Generally, provision of clean water is a social responsibility of the government. Consequently, amenities and access to water are provided for in the federal government's budget allocations. However, access to clean water is a major problem in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Water Resources & Rural Development, 1992-1995; POLICY Project/Nigeria, 2002; ESMAP, 2005; Salawu, 2010). More importantly, the UNICEF's (2011c) analysis of child deprivations in Nigeria reported access to safe drinking water to be the most prevalent deprivation facing children, while sanitation was the second most frequent. According to the analysis, child deprivation events are not mutually exclusive, as one deprivation may heighten another. For example, poor access to water and sanitation was indicated as having a negative impact on children's health.

The provision of safe drinking water and basic sanitation is so fundamental to children's health that under the basic principles of the CRA and Article 24 of the CRC, it was indicated that every government in Nigeria shall strive to provide and sustain safe drinking water and a hygienic and sanitised environment for children (UNCRC, 1989; UNICEF, 2007). This means that the state is not only required to ensure that children have access to clean water for domestic and personal use, but is also required to protect the quality of drinking-water supplies and resources for children. Nwankwoala (2011) adds that access to safe water means that the water utilised is devoid of health risk, affordable and sufficient to meet people's domestic needs. As noted in the UN Fact Sheet No. 35 on the Right to Water, children have less body mass than adults, thus lack of safe drinking water makes children more vulnerable to diseases. Their immune systems and detoxification mechanisms are not fully developed, so they are often less able to respond to a water-related infection. Therefore, waterborne chemicals may be dangerous for a child at a concentration that is relatively harmless for an adult.

According to the 2006 census report, Nigeria's population is largely rural with 63.7% of the population living in rural areas (NPC, 2006). The general consensus is that people in the rural areas are more disadvantaged (UNICEF, 2011c; Nwankwoala, 2011). For

example, while less than one-half of the population has access to safe water; the percentage is only forty in rural areas. Correspondingly, while 41% have access to adequate sanitation nationwide, only 32% in rural areas have the same (Federal Ministry of Water Resources & Rural Development, 1992-1995; POLICY Project/Nigeria, 2002). What makes the preceding statements even more important for our purposes is that, according to current reports, "three in every four children in Nigeria live in the rural areas" (UNICEF, 2011c:2). By implication, children in the rural areas are more deprived in relation to water and these deprivations often lead to other deprivations, particularly in relation to health.

Drawing on insights from the MDGs (2010) review, access to safe water and sanitation still remains a serious challenge in Nigeria, and many families do not have access to safe drinking water. In an effort to cope with the growing problems of water supply, the nation has engaged in several national programmes focused on improving water and sanitation services. However, these programmes have been bedevilled by many problems ranging from lack of funding to a lack of sustained commitments, poor programme implementation/execution and corruption. A reoccurring observation throughout this study is that corruption has been a major factor affecting the success of children's well-being programmes in the nation. Reports show that billions of naira has been invested in water projects over recent years but the trend of improved drinking water has dropped from 60% of the population in 2003 to 49% in 2007 (UNICEF, 2011c). Other studies, such as a 2011 Water Initiative Nigeria report, have also accused the government of not prioritising children's interests in its water development programmes.

Moving to the level of local government, a study by Water Initiative Nigeria in Ibadan (Oyo state), reported that schools in Ibadan and other major cities in Nigeria lack adequate access to water and environmental sanitation. The study noted that large number of the population lack water and proper sewage systems especially at schools and health centres. As a result, children face health risks such as infection and parasites from lack access to adequate sanitary facilities like latrines and hand washing facilities. Additionally, children's ability to learn within school environments is also hampered with alarming rates of infection, parasites and flukes. Worse still, the government has not shown any sustained interest in providing education and information on how to contain the epidemic of waterborne diseases in these areas. It then follows that water and environmental sanitation in rural areas has not been a priority on the agenda of many local authorities. The

implication is that schools and public places can become unsafe places where diseases are transmitted, and in some cases human lives are lost.

2.4.3.2   Food

At both international and local levels, ensuring children's right to safe, nutritious and healthy food has been recognised as a government obligation and the Nigerian government has agreed to protect children's right to food as articulated in the CRC and the ACRWC. Further, in 1993, the government acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereafter ICESCR). Under the ICESCR, the 'right to food' is defined as the right to be free from hunger and to have sustainable access to food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy one's dietary and cultural needs. However, statistics available have shown that about 65% of Nigerians are food insecure, with insufficient access to the amount and variety of food for a healthy and productive life (Obinna, 2011).

While the Nigeria CRA recognises the role of parents in providing food for their children, the Act also obliges government to play a role that can enable the private sector to support parents/carers fulfil these duties. Nonetheless, given the prevalence of poverty in the nation, many children bear the consequences of a hunger which leaves them malnourished. Nationally, the overall prevalence of stunting, wasting and underweight children is 42%, 9% and 25%, respectively (Avril, 2011). In some cases, these conditions force children to adapt to poor coping strategies such as scavenging for food from refuse sites and getting jobs in dangerous conditions. At the same time, while malnutrition is prevalent across the nation, children in the rural areas fared worse. UNICEF (2011c) concludes that there is a particularly high level of poor access to healthy food amongst children in the rural areas, although there is a geographical dimension to this, with levels of 56% reported in a rural area of South West Nigeria but 84.3% reported in the rural parts of Northern Nigeria.

The problems of hunger and access to food in Nigeria have also been linked to the government's poor commitment to pro-poor growth policies and agricultural development policies (NHDR, 2008/9). Akinleye (2009) supports this view by arguing that due to the government's negligence of its agricultural sector, the nation relies heavily on food imports which often results in irregular food supply, poor quality foods, high food costs and even a general lack of food. He also argues that the budgetary allocation to children's access to

healthy food is low and in most cases these allocations are expended on overheads and burdensome management expenses. Several recent reports, such as the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2011, have concluded that hunger remains a problem in Nigeria and the nation is not likely to meet the MDG target to reduce by half the incidence of hunger and child mortality by the year 2015.

2.4.3.3   Health

In general, health represents an inter-sectorial development issue in a nation and child health in particular ensures survival, good growth and correct development of the child. Article 4 of the CRC obliges state parties to strive to provide medical and primary healthcare for children. In addition, Section 13 of the CRA indicates that a child is entitled to 'the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health' (UNICEF, 2007). Despite these international and national instruments, Nigeria's ranking of 100th in health and survival out of 128 countries reflects the dismal state of the nation's health sector (UNDP, 2008/9). Children are said to face major health problems in Nigeria in the first few months and years of their lives (UNDP, 2008/9). Reports on child health revealed that Nigeria was ranked the 18th highest among world countries with high under-five mortality rates. A series of reports have also indicated unenviable records in almost every health indicator for children in Nigeria (MICS, 2007; NPC, 2008; UNICEF, 2011a); suggesting that children are particularly threatened by extreme poverty and hunger, nutritional deficiencies, unhygienic and unsafe environments, ingestion of unsafe water, inadequate availability of water for hygiene, lack of access to sanitation and illnesses (POLICY Project/Nigeria, 2002; Black *et al*., 2003; Ronald, 2005; UNPD, 2006; MICS, 2007; NPC, 2008; UNICEF, 2011a). Overall these reports illustrates that Nigeria is unlikely to meet the fourth Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing child mortality by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015.

With regards to health infrastructures and medical facilities in Nigeria, reports also indicate that a majority of the populace do not have access to adequate health facilities. In 2007, the Federal Ministry of Health stated that Nigeria has about 18,258 primary healthcare facilities (PHCs), 3,275 secondary facilities, and 29 tertiary facilities to cater for a population of 140 million people (WHO, 2007). Although these numbers seem substantial, a study by UNICEF (2011c:4) argues that they serve "less than 20% of their potential patient load, with the availability and quality of care varying from state to state". Ahamba

(2011) adds that Nigeria's PHCs are of decaying infrastructures, basically lacking medicines, water supplies, electricity and in critical need of doctors and nurses as a result of the government's poor commitment to health programmes such as lack of adequate funding, management and accountability to health programmes.

Despite the government's budget allocations to the health sector, several commentators have suggested that there is still a low level of political commitment given the challenges of the health problems in the nation. Child health in particular has not recorded much improvement and children's access to essential health facilities and amenities which should be provided by the government is inadequate. According to a report by Business Day Newspaper (2011), due to the poor funding of the health sector, private expenditure on health is 90% of total health expenditure when compared with 79% in Ghana and 24% in the United States. Associated with the problem of poor government funding to the healthcare sector in Nigeria is the crisis of the brain drain syndrome. The brain drain phenomenon means that qualified doctors and nurses are emigrating from Nigeria to other nations in search of a more attractive healthcare system environment and remuneration (UNDP, 2006; UNICEF, 2011c).

A proliferation of studies has also shown a link between the poor healthcare systems and the probability of children being orphaned and rendered vulnerable (UNICEF, 2011b). For example, in 2003, there were approximately 7 million orphans and vulnerable Nigerian (OVC) children living in poverty (Coache, 2008), but by 2008, the UNICEF/Child info data base estimated the number of Orphans in Nigeria to be 9.7 million; making it the third highest absolute number of orphans in the world, after India (25 million) and China (17 million). Overall, the statistical figures on child health and survival, suggests that the Nigerian government's is faced with an urgent need to provide a more effective means in addressing effective healthcare services.

2.4.3.4 Child Work/Labour

Although child labour was mentioned as a significant phenomenon within the wider African context, evidence shows that it is widespread in Nigeria and is tending to increase at an alarming rate due to the poverty faced by many families. In 2001, Nigeria was estimated to have about 12 million child workers, which represent one of the highest levels in the world (Anugwom, 2003). In addition, current reports from ILO suggest that child

labourers in Nigeria constitute over 6% of the global total of child labourers figure (Nte *et al*., 2009). Other studies also note that 15 million children under the age of 14 are involved in a variety of hazardous types of work across Nigeria (ITUC, 201I; UNICEF, 2011c).

In a bid to explain the main reason for child labour in Nigeria, Anugwom (2003), for example, argues that the socio-political and economic manifestation of globalisation has gradually eroded the traditional process of child 'activity' in countries like Nigeria, which was more of a socialisation process, producing the present practice of child 'labour' which is more of an economic exploitation of children. This argument connects to the positions of authors such as Robson (2004) and Kesby *et al*. (2006) who, as discussed earlier, maintain that the conceptualisation of modern African childhoods has changed from traditional local cultural patterns as a result of the interaction of factors such as colonial interventions. In Nwiro's (2010) view, the rise of child labour is significantly associated with the growth in poverty following the end of the oil boom in the 70s. Under these conditions, children were forced to work for survival in dangerous and unhealthy conditions such as inadequate food or medical care and received very low incomes to sustain their families. Within this context of poverty, Tojunde and Carter (2007) assert that child labour becomes an essential part of household survival strategies, as children may be required to join the labour force to sustain themselves and their impoverished families. At the same time, as economic conditions worsen parents and guardians who are no longer able to provide the basic needs (such as food, health and shelter) for their children are generally willing to permit their children to work for financial returns or a guaranteed future for their children (Okafor and Amayo, 2006).

Focusing on a report by the ITUC (201I), child labour in Nigeria extends to street hawking, street begging, vagrancy and the use of children as transport conductors. The ITUC establish that child labour encompasses girls working as domestic servants and commercial sexual exploitation in houses, port cities and refugee camps. Within rural areas, children are also found performing hazardous work in mines, fisheries and agriculture, particularly tobacco and cassava, dealing with pesticides and dangerous tools. While in urban settings, children are most often street vendors, scavengers and beggars. Drawing on these assertions, Anugwom (2003) also indicates that street trading or hawking accounts for the highest number of working children in Nigeria. He argues that children are often found hawking their goods for long hours on main roads or streets alongside moving vehicles.

Indeed, this form of child labour does not only expose children to a significant amount of risk caused by car accidents but it is hazardous to their health and general wellbeing. Although reliable data on health implication are not available, studies of the coping mechanisms of street children report that most have experienced child abuse, work accidents and injuries while street hawking (Okeahialam, 1984; Olutayo, 1994; Aderinto, 2000; ITUC, 2011).

To tackle some of issues stoking child labour, the Nigerian Government has taken some steps by ratifying all eight principal International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions. Under these Conventions work that does not interfere with children's education (light work) is permitted from between the ages of 12 to 14. In line with this measure, the 2008 Nigerian Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development defines child work as separate from child labour. Child work is defined as that participation in economic activity that does not negatively affect a child's health and development or interfere with their education (as stipulated under the ILO Convention), while child labour refers to children working in contravention of the above standards (i.e. child work). Child labour also includes children below 12 years working in any economic activities, and those aged 12 to 14 years engaged in harmful work, and all children engaged in the worst forms of labour (i.e. being enslaved, forcibly recruited, prostituted, trafficked, forced into illegal activities or exposed to hazardous work) (FMWASD, 2008). Going by these definitions, child work can be considered to be socially acceptable, while child labour undermines the social development of children.

It can be argued that Nigeria's definition of child labour tends to be western in conception and unrealistic because it undervalues the economic and social contributions by children below the ages of 12. While not romanticizing child labour, due to the poverty challenges in some households and the high cost of school fees (as seen in Section 7.2), a variety of studies have demonstrated that children below the ages of 12 frequently have to work to pay school fees and this in some case interferes with their education (EFA, 2009; Ekpenyong and Sibiri, 2011; ITUC, 2011; UNICEF, 2011). As noted earlier, Bonnet (1993) suggests that the problem is not with child work per se but with the conditions of child work, since it is an unavoidable part of many children's lives.

From the forgoing, it is therefore not surprising that despite the existence of the guidelines and labour Acts noted above, child labour continues to be an intractable problem in Nigeria

(ITUC, 2011; UNICEF, 2011C). Furthermore, the existing laws and bye-laws prohibiting child labour are not enforced effectively hence they are frequently defied and offenders are not prosecuted (UNICEF, 2011c). Anugwom (2003) also points out that the increased demand for child labour results from children's low economic cost, which is an attraction for child labour employers. In general, a range of authors have indicated the role of a variety of socio-economic factors in Nigeria (such as high rates of unemployment, family greed, poor educational achievement, cultural and religious factors) as contributory reasons that have compelled children to enter the labour force (Anugwom, 2003; Bass, 2004; Charles & Charles, 2004; Tojunde and Carter, 2007; Okafor, 2010).

2.4.3.5   Child Education

Access to child education has been recognised as one of the fundamental rights of a child in the CRC, ACRWC and the CRA as ratified by the Nigerian government. The Nigerian education system is steered by national objectives, which are entrenched in the national policy on education whilst the financing of basic education is the responsibility of States and Local Governments (Igbuzor, 2006). Despite huge investments in the educational sector, the growth and development of the Nigerian educational sector is slow. Adelabu (2006) suggest that this is resulting from poor implementation patterns, corruption and instability in government policies on educational reforms.

Taking a cursory look at the Nigerian education history, in 1976, the military government of Nigeria instituted the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme, a six year educational scheme designed to provide free and compulsory education to children at the primary school level (Oni, 2008). The scheme was however not as effective as hoped for, although there was substantial progress in relation to literacy and the numbers of pupils in school. While the scheme positively generated an explosion in the number of schools in the nation, it faced the challenge of accommodating the massively increased enrolment of pupils. For example, Csapo (1983) asserts that in April 1976, there were 244 primary schools for 15,796 pupils in Niger state. Within four months, the number of pupils has quadrupled, which meant that the state needed 931 primary schools for an additional 63,384 pupils. According to Oni (2008), the UPE failed due to flawed population census, poor planning and poor pupil number projections. Other scholars such as Ejere (2011) attributed the collapse of the UPE to poor performance and policy implementation failures.

Consequently, the UPE scheme was later abandoned and replaced with the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme in 1999. The UBE was introduced to help meet the Nigeria's commitments under the Education for All (EFA) programme and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but also faced difficult challenges as a result of inadequate infrastructures, limited funding, high levels of corruption and poor administration (UBEC, 2010). To begin with, the progress of the UBE was hampered by the lack of an enabling law to execute certain aspects of the programme. Eventually, the UBE bill was passed into law on 26th May 2004, following its passage by the National Assembly. The 2004 UBE Act stipulates the provision of free and compulsory schooling for the first nine years of all Nigerian children of school age (UBEC, 2010).

While the Nigerian government appears committed to global initiatives in promoting child education, a study by Adepoju and Fabiyi (2007) on the existing national situation in primary education, suggests that the UBE's commitment to free education really only exists on paper as most children face severe constraints in attending school due to the hidden and the apparent costs of education, let alone the impacts of poorly paid and unmotivated teachers. Their findings showed that 12% of primary school pupils sit on the floor, 38% classrooms have no ceilings, 87% classrooms are overcrowded, while 77% pupils lack textbooks. Other than poor execution of the UBE programme and the high cost of school fees, the nation is also faced with the problem of high levels of school dropout. A 2005 UNICEF report indicated that Nigeria alongside countries such as India, Pakistan, and Ethiopia have the greatest numbers of children out of school. In 2005 alone, 8 million children in Nigeria were recorded as being out of schooling, constituting 23% of Nigeria's child population (UNICEF, 2011c). According to Moja (2000), the average dropout rate within the Nigerian primary school level between the period 1986 and 1992 was estimated to be 43.2%. Further analysis indicates a gendered element to school drop outs, as more girls seem to drop out of school than boys (UNICEF, 2011c).

Other than the poor performance of the EFA policies and/or reforms put in place by government, the problems of unmotivated teachers has also been highlighted as contributing to poor or irregular school attendance among children in the country (EFA, 2009). Baikie (2002) argues that it will take teachers with the crucial technical ability and professional skills (developed through a well-coordinated teacher's education programme) to meet the challenges of Nigeria's educational system. Adelabu (2006) concurs by noting

that the poor pay of teachers and the dearth of properly trained teachers constitute a major hindrance to the development of an effective educational system that could respond to Nigeria's educational crisis. In line with this, a UNICEF report also revealed that the "reward system has been quite unfair to the teachers: job satisfaction is low; morale ebbing and productivity has diminished" (2011c:109). As a result, the quality of education provided by teachers has continued to dwindle especially in government owned schools.

Given the combination of the aforementioned issues, a global monitoring report for the period 2009-2010 not only ranked Nigeria's primary education level as 132nd out of the 133 countries surveyed, but also stated that Nigeria accounts for around one in eight of all out-of-school children (EFA, 2009:14). The EFA report also considered Nigeria as "off the track" resulting from "the price of weak governance" in attaining the EFA goals of achieving universal primary educational (EFA, 2009: 62). The report went further to project that if current trends continue, an estimated 29 million children will be out of school in Nigeria by 2015. This represents the largest out-of-school population projected for 2015 (7.6 million) followed by Pakistan (3.7 million), Burkina Faso and Ethiopia (1.1 million each), Niger and Kenya (0.9 million each). Interestingly, the report also noted that some low-income countries, including Ethiopia, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania, are outperforming richer countries such as Nigeria and Pakistan in getting children into school. For instance, through government policy interventions, the United Republic of Tanzania was reported to have reduced its out-of-school population from over 3 million in 1999 to fewer than 150,000 in 2006 within 7 years.

Apart from these concerns, there are important gendered dimensions to child education issues within Nigeria especially in the north, where only 40% of primary school-age girls are enrolled in some northern states, compared with 80% in the south-east (EFA, 2009).

2.4.3.6 Housing Facilities

As noted under the 1989 CRC and the Nigerian 2003 CRA, provision of adequate housing or home facilities for children is another fundamental aspect to improving the quality of children's lives. In this context, the provision for adequate housing represents, not only a secure place for children to live but also infers adequate basic housing facilities such as electricity, toilet conditions and a safe environment. In general terms, poor quality housing is associated with infrastructure (water, sanitation, drainage, electricity and waste disposal)

essential to boost children's wellbeing. Within Nigeria, several authors have evidenced that housing situation is challenging, particularly in rural areas where a large population of people live in sub-standard poor housing deplorable conditions and an insanitary environment (Anthonio, 2002; Olotuah and Ajenifujah, 2009; Ademiluyi, 2010). Various studies, such as Madaki and Ogunrayewa (1999), have linked political and socio-economic problems to the challenges of shelter and housing needs in Nigeria. For instance, the UNICEF (2011c) report indicates that on paper, government continues to amass billions of Naira to housing conditions such electricity supply, however, in reality, these services become scarcer commodities.

A study by Homeless International (undated), notes poor housing facilities impose enormous health and direct threats to children's physical safety. In addition, children's educational opportunities are also severely restricted by a family's need to concentrate time and money on maintaining shelter and related infrastructure, often requiring children to take on basic domestic responsibilities and/or income-generating tasks from an early age. Moreover, poor housing facilities can also threaten children's health thereby imposing economic costs on top of direct physical and emotional suffering. Shelter (2006) also adds that children living in bad housing facilities, which include houses in unfit conditions, requiring substantial repairs and lacking in modern facilities are almost twice as likely to suffer from poor health as other children.

2.4.3.7   Play Spaces

Article 31 of the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989) indicates that children's right to leisure, play and culture is significant in enhancing the quality of children's lives. Section 12 of the Nigerian CRA (2003) also states that every child is entitled to adequate rest, recreation, leisure and play according to his or her age and culture. While enactment of these rights is certainly laudable, there has been very little research on interpreting and implementing the provisions of children's right to play and recreation in Nigeria. Taking into consideration the challenges facing Nigerian children, such as the many strands of poverty, studies have not considered the fundamental role of child play as an integral part of children's lives. This is an important aspect for this study since, as noted by Thomas and Thompson (2004), children's wellbeing and environmental issues are inextricably linked and children are particularly susceptible to environmental problems, such as air pollution, and unhealthy environments frequently mean children are less able to play freely.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has considered how the literature on children and childhood has been deployed in different societal contexts to explain, not only the conceptualisation and construction of children and childhood in the west but also the specific dynamics of power and certain kinds of resistance to western practices in non-western societies. The chapter has explored these discussions within three contexts: Global, African and Nigerian.

Literature concerning the global contexts, revealed that entrenched in the study of children's lives are the dynamic, historic and current debates on childhood construction, which are mainly western. These various approaches and understanding of children and childhood has been influenced by debates on the different practices and constructions of children and childhood within academic and international organisations. As a result, studies on children and childhood have gained a prominent place in society and have become increasingly important. For instance, debates surrounding the historical context, showed that the conceptualisation of childhood has evolved from being non-existent to gradually being conceived as existing in their own right completely separated from those of adults.

However, despite years of debates on childhood construction, the definition of a child has not reached a consensus. While biological-anthropologists and traditional sociologists regard a child as anyone in the developmental stage of childhood − between infancy and adulthood, international agencies such as the UNCRC defines childhood within the chronological age marking of the child. Breaking away from these constructions, the new social studies of childhood maintain that a child is a social construct shaped by a series of heterogeneous factors such as culture, image, race and other diverse experiences. Particularly, while the new studies approach perceives children as competent and active 'social actors' within the society, proponents of the UNCRC approach portray children as 'innocent' or 'defenceless'. By focusing on these theoretical approaches, one of the significant issues that have emerged from this chapter is that the image of a child is significant and fundamental to how society connects with children. For instance, most children's rights practitioners create policies based on their perceptions of children as both innocent and subjects of social rights.

Perhaps more importantly, within the African contexts, the chapter established that the UNCRC's representation of a child which has been adopted by the majority of African countries tends to stem from a western 'universal' ideology of a child. By unmasking the diversity of childhoods to reveal 'other' childhoods and 'other' than 'other' childhoods in African societies, supporters of the new studies have argued that the principles of the Convention have not taken into consideration some global issues surrounding African societies such as the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial interventions that have shaped modern African societies. Furthermore, discussions also showed that other factors such as armed conflicts, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, corruption cultures and structural adjustment policies have taken their toll on African childhoods and have continued to shape the experiences of children. Thus, the implication is that, despite the shift in international policy towards children in African societies by the ratification of the UNCRC and other instruments such as the African Charter, international practices to protect children's rights fail to fit perfectly in African societies.

Within the Nigerian context discussion, studies revealed that the lives of Nigerian children have been affected by myriad factors including child poverty, child labour and poor child health and survival challenges resulting from the country's socio-economic problems, poor economic management of natural resources and the culture of corruption. To combat these problems and promote children's rights, Nigeria, like the rest of Africa, has ratified regional and international treaties such as the UNCRC, the African Charter and domesticated its Children's Rights Act. However, like the rest of Africa, the implementation of children's rights has not yielded the desired results and the reality of addressing child-related problems still remains a malaise. Specifically the role of the state and the ways in which it defines, structures, monitors, implement and execute child well-being programmes significantly affects children's lives and well-being. For instance, the poor implementation and ineffective monitoring of initiatives such as the 2004 Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act and 2003 Children's Right Act (which aims at enhancing children's rights) have continued to negatively affect the lives of children, particularly in the rural areas. Furthermore, with the state of poverty and underdevelopment within the country, studies indicate that the government has not adequately provided enabling environments for parents/carers by distilling their parental responsibilities to children.

Overall, one salient issue that has emerged from this chapter is that existing literature on non-western childhoods attributes their experiences largely to socio-economic aspirations and dynamic life events such as the impacts of HIV/AIDS in affected households. For instance, within the Nigerian context, the general impression indicates that children's experiences are negatively affected by poor nation's socio-economic development and poor coordination/implementation of child-related policies. Considering this, the majority of studies on Nigerian children have not given considerable attention to the activities of multinational corporations in shaping the lives of children. Thus, an under-researched theme within the geographies of children in the non-western countries such as Nigeria is the examination of how children's lives and experiences are shaped by the combined actions of the federal government and the transnational corporations. In order to address this key limitation, this thesis aims to further our understanding of children's lives by examining children's experiences based on the roles of government and oil companies in undertaking oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

This thesis will draw upon notions of the 'new' social studies of childhood, which perceive children not only as social actors but as human beings in their own rights, whose experiences are shaped by culture, gender, race and, undeniably, biological factors. This study also contributes to the literature by arguing that international practices such as the UNCRC, which tend to conceptualises children as 'passive' actors, ignore the influence of social dynamics in shaping the lives of children. By perceiving children as social constructs and identifying children as the subject of the research, this study aims to present children's experiences in their own voices but it also includes the voices of adults. This perspective aims to add to the literature on the child/adult debate and portray the different constructions of children and childhood in the Niger Delta region.

With the focus of this thesis on children in the Niger Delta region, the next chapter will explore the current state of knowledge of this region. The chapter will also establish the dynamics and interconnectedness between Nigeria, the Niger Delta region and oil resources. By focusing on this, the chapter will discuss the broad concerns emerging from oil exploration activities in the region, and how the discovery and exploration of crude oil has affected the lives of the Niger Delta people.

3
CHAPTER THREE
NIGERIA AND OIL EXPLORATION - THE NIGER DELTA REGION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Nigeria, its oil resource exploration and the Niger Delta region. The chapter aims to provide an understanding of that part of Nigeria commonly referred to as the Niger Delta region and in particular the impacts of oil exploration activities on the people of the region. With the focus of this study on children, the chapter will also discuss the existing literatures on the lives of children in the region. The chapter thus aims to provide a broad picture of the contextual issues framing the study; in effect it acts as a prelude to the analysis chapters which follow that focus on the voices of children in the region.

The chapter is organized into seven sections, the first of which is the introduction. The second section gives a brief discussion of Nigeria's oil resource exploration activities. This section also examines the implications of the centrality of oil revenues to the evolution of the Nigerian economy. The third section undertakes a critical examination of the Niger Delta region which is the home to Nigeria's oil resources. It discusses how the discovery and exploration of crude oil by oil companies has affected the lives and economy of the Niger delta people. The fourth section then delves deeper into the potential disadvantages of these oil exploration activities. The fifth section assesses some of the responses to these problems by; the local people in oil-bearing communities, the oil multinationals and the federal government of Nigeria. The sixth section focuses on the lives of the Niger Delta children and some of the issues relating to the impacts of oil exploration activities on them. Finally the seventh section brings together the conclusions from the chapter.

3.2 Nigeria and Oil Exploration

Nigeria is richly endowed with both human and natural resources, such as crude oil, gas and agricultural products. However, the nation's economy mainly relies on its vast oil and gas resources. The nation has estimated total oil reserves of 36 billion barrels and one of the world's biggest natural gas reserves at 187 trillion cubic feet (Iledare and Suberu, 2010; ThisDay News, 2010b). Several studies such as Ajomo (1987) trace oil exploration

activities in Nigeria back to around 1908 when they were initiated by a German Company named the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation. Literature also points out that the company abandoned its dry, shallow wells at the start of World War I in 1914. Thereafter, in 1936, the Anglo-Dutch group Shell D'Arcy was granted sole rights to explore for hydrocarbons all over Nigeria (although for a time in a joint venture with British Petroleum) and prospecting began in 1937 (HRW, 1999). Nonetheless, it was not until in 1956 that Shell D'Arcy discovered oil in commercial quantities at Oloibiri, a town in the Niger Delta, which is in the present Bayelsa State (Ibeanu, 1997).

After Nigeria gained its independence from British Rule in 1960, further oil and gas fields were discovered. Consequently, a new government in Lagos limited the Anglo-Dutch group's sole concession and invited other companies like ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, TotalFinaElf, and Agip amongst others, to explore for oil and gas (Ibeanu, 2000; NNPC, 2010). With increased oil exploration activities, Nigeria was producing an estimated 2 million barrels per day (bpd) in 1970, compared to the 5 thousand bpd it was producing in 1958 when oil was first discovered. The proceeds of this increased oil exportation ushered in an influx of petro-dollars which boosted the nation's economy in the 1970s. Interestingly, these periods coincided with the global oil boom era, helping to portray the nation as a land of opportunities at that time. However, the evidence presented in this chapter clearly shows that over the years these hopes do not appear to have been achieved.

Before proceeding, it is important to take a look at the operational structure of oil operation activities in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) representing the federal government's interests owns 55 or 60% as the majority stakeholder while a range of international and national oil companies operate smaller concessions. In essence, oil explorations are carried out as joint ventures in which the Nigerian government through the NNPC holds the larger share while also in control of overseeing refined and unrefined petroleum products in Nigeria (HRW, 1999; McPherson, 2003).

Through the years of oil production, the oil and gas sector has become strategically crucial to the Nigerian economy and Nigerian production of these commodities is of global significance. As of 2008, Nigeria was the world's 13th largest oil producer, the 5th largest in OPEC, with a daily capacity production of 2.3 million barrels per day. Additionally, the revenue from the oil and gas sector has generated massive revenues for the nation's economy. For instance, oil revenue increased from about $200 million in 1970, to about

$32 billion between 1973 and 1978, averaging over $6 billion oil earnings per year (Kolawole, 2011). Omotola (2010) added that in 2006, the Nigerian government estimated it was earning about $36 billion each year from the extensive petroleum industry. Based on these huge revenues, the oil and gas sector rapidly became the dominant economic sector in Nigeria and currently contributes approximately 95% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and 80% of government revenue (World Bank, 2007; NHDR, 2008/9; Aaron and Dewari, 2010).

Despite this phenomenal growth in Nigerian oil revenue, Aaron (2005) asserts that these figures conceal more than they reveal. Aaron argues that they do not reveal the overall state of socio-economic development in Nigeria, which suggests that the nation's economy possesses parallel patterns of wealth and poverty. No doubt, this argument has been reinforced by subsequent research findings and narratives as shown in the empirical chapters of this study. According to Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian (2003), between 1970 and 2000 the poverty incidence of those living on less than US$1/day increased from around 36% of the national population to around 70%, translating into a real increase in the number of people living in poverty from 19 million in 1970 to 90 million in 2000. Further, Ngwafon *et al.*'s (1997) study indicated that Nigeria ranked as 13th amongst the world's poorest nations for the period from 1985 to 1992; whilst a UNICEF (2010) study reported that 71% of the nation's population lives on less than one dollar a day and 92% on less than two dollars a day.

In a bid to decipher the problems associated with the prevalence of poverty in the nation, a 2008/9 Human Development Report on Nigeria suggests development in the nation's economy has been hampered by a variety of internal problems such as "inadequate human development, primitive agricultural practices, weak infrastructure, uninspiring growth of the manufacturing sector, a poor policy and regulatory environment and misuse of resources" (NHDR, 2008/9:9). In a sense, the prevalence of Nigeria's underdevelopment in spite of its abundant natural resources is indeed a paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty or, as put by some authors, a 'resource curse'. A large literature exists, which links the current state of Nigeria to the resource curse theory (see Ite, 2005; Watts, 2005; Ogwumike and Ogunleye, 2008; Orogun, 2009; Omotola, 2010; Dode, 2011).

The complexities and perceived challenges surrounding Nigeria's dependence on oil revenue will be considered in the next section with a view to highlighting its relevance to this thesis.

3.2.1   Nigeria and the Complexities of Oil Revenue Dependence

While oil revenue has become the lifeblood of the nation's economy, several studies evidence that the oil and gas sector has not always been the dominant sector in the nation's economy (Adedipe, 2004; NHDR, 2008/9; ThisDay News, 2010b). Adedipe (2004) observes that when Nigeria gained independence in 1960, agriculture was the dominant sector of the economy, contributing about 70% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 90% of foreign exchange earnings and federal government revenue. To be specific, between 1963 and 1964, oil revenue accounted for less than 10% of Nigeria's revenue; contributing 4.1% and 5.9% respectively (Graf, 1988). The advent of oil during this period clearly only had minor significance in the Nigerian economy. However, from the 1970's, due to the phenomenal growth in the oil sector, agriculture's contribution to total GDP dwindled significantly from about 50% in 1970 to 34% in 2003 (CBN, 2003; Muhammad-Lawal and Atte, 2006) but increased to 47% in 2007, whilst the share of oil also increased to about 24% in the same year (NHDR, 2008/9). On the contrary, other significant sectors such as the manufacturing sector have been relatively stagnant in its total GDP contribution from 6% in 1985 to a range of between 4 and 5% during 1990-2007 (NHDR, 2008/9).

According to Ross (2003), the oil boom era of the mid-1970s led to an upsurge in global oil prices, which generated more revenue in the nation's oil sector than its agricultural sector. Consequently, the contribution of oil revenue to the nation's total revenue rose from 25.9% in 1970 to 81.4% by 1979 (Graf, 1988). As put by ThisDay News (2010b), the significance of oil was such that, while revenue from agricultural products had generated millions of dollars, oil revenue flooded the economy with billions of dollars. Consequently, the nation began to concentrate on maximizing the revenue from its oil and gas sector while neglecting other economic sectors. Particularly within the context of adequate budgetary allocation and growth policies, sectors such as agricultural industries suffered much neglect by the federal government. As a result, over the years, the nation's excessive dependence on oil revenues and its failure to diversify its economy has established the nation as an oil-revenue-dependent country.

One major downside to Nigeria's over reliance on oil revenue has been its impact upon how the nation has faced the major challenges of its human and socio-economic development. As already discussed extensively in the preceding chapter of this study, the impediments to the socio-economic development of the nation have also compounded the hardship felt by rural dwellers − particularly children who suffer from deprivations resulting from poverty and poor access to basic resources and services. Following the government's low commitment to the agricultural sector, its economic performance dropped and its contribution to the nation's total exports fell from 70% in 1970 to 2% in 1990 and to about 0.2% in 2006 (Daramola *et al*., 2007).

Studies from CBN (1997/2000) also evidenced that Nigeria's food exports have declined from the 1980s onwards, while imports rose from N3.47 million in 1990 to N113.63 billion in 2000. As reported in a recent interview, the Nigerian Minister of Agriculture stated that in 1961, Nigeria's contribution to world's export was 42% in shelled groundnut, 27% in palm oil and 18% in cocoa (Vanguard, 2012). However, by 2008, the nation produces far below expectation and lost its potential to other countries. Therefore, while domestic agricultural production continues to decrease, food imports have increased significantly as according to the Minister, "Nigeria currently imports over N1 trillion worth of rice, wheat, sugar and fish every year. Importation of wheat alone accounts for N635 billion every year… [the nation] is losing about 10 billion dollars annually in export opportunities in the agriculture sector" (Vanguard, 2012).

The main upheaval, as argued by Muhammad-Lawal and Atte (2006:5) is that food importation has also placed serious constraints on local farmers who are exposed to "unfair competition by foreign producers who usually take advantage of economies of scale in production due to their access to better production technology". Additionally, there is a large literature suggesting that the increasing food importation has resulted in food insecurity (Eneh, 2008/2011). Building on these reports, the deduction is that Nigeria which once exported a variety of food and cash crops now relies on imports to sustain itself. Interestingly, the significance of the agricultural sector in Nigeria is such that current agricultural practices, which are often of a subsistence pattern, continue to account for more than 70% of formal and informal employment, while the oil sector, which is the backbone of the nation's economy, employs just 1% of the labour force (Robinson, 1996; NHDR, 2008/9). A 2011 UNICEF report identified the "enclave nature of the oil sector

and its low labour absorption capacity" as a challenge to economic growth and income generation especially as this challenge does not benefit the poor (2011c:22). By implication, the concentration of oil companies in the hands of a few tends to decrease employment opportunities for a large number of Nigerians. Ross (2003) also agrees by adding that the very high capital-intensive nature of the oil industry protects major oil firms against competition from other firms.

Another major setback arising from Nigeria's dependence on oil revenue is the extreme vulnerability to crude price oil shocks of the Nigerian economy. The volatility of crude oil prices results in positive and negative shocks which clearly impact upon the availability of sustainable and predictable revenues for development strategies. As put by Ross (2003), both negative and positive shocks hurt the quality of government services. On positive shocks, generally, it is expected that windfall gains from high oil prices over short periods of time will increase available revenues and provide a profitable incentive to development. The tendency is that positive shocks can significantly improve rural infrastructure and access to basic facilities such as the health and educational sectors. For example, oil price increased from an average of $3/barrel in 1973 to $12 towards the end of 1974. In another example, the Nigerian budget was drafted with a benchmark of $62.50 per barrel in 2008, while market crude oil price fluctuated between about $100 to $147 a barrel that year.

However, several studies have revealed that Nigeria has an extraordinarily poor record on public investment productivity and high levels of corruption that have continued to hamper socio-economic development (Graf, 1988; HRW, 1999; Watts, 1999; Oduah, 2006; NHDR, 2008/9; Akpan, 2009; ThisDay, 2010). The factors affecting the adequate utilisation of positive shock benefits have also been a major developmental hitch in transferring the financial resources generated through the oil industry to other growth sectors like the agricultural sector, which are more suited to meeting the employment needs of the nation's citizens. This argument is relevant to this thesis, particularly, as examined in Chapter Two, a review of child-related policies and the general state of children's lives shows that despite the positive shocks in the oil sector, the provision of, and access to, basic resources needed by children remains a great challenge.

In relation to negative shocks, the main problem with negative shocks is that when oil prices drop, it distorts the federal government's budget and frequently, these shocks tend to harm the poor since they are less able to protect themselves. For instance, UNICEF (2011c:

3) reports that in April 2009, crude oil prices were $114 per barrel, a month later, they had dropped to $64 per barrel. Another huge negative shock was also reported in 1982, which resulted in Nigeria's foreign reserves crashing from $10 billion in 1980 to $1 billion in 1983 (ThisDay News, 2010b). As evidenced in Chapter Two, some child-related initiatives within the health and educational sectors have suffered from discontinuity and abandonment due to low funding and distortions in budgetary allocations. Considering this, a convincing argument can be made to suggest that negative shocks also undermine children's well-being programmes.

Furthermore, other authors have reported that negative shocks have also resulted from the activities of militants (mainly from the Niger Delta region). According to Asuni (2009a), between 2008 and 2009, Nigeria lost considerable revenues as oil company operations in the swamps and creeks of the Niger Delta region were severely hampered by militants seeking to gain local control of a greater share of the oil wealth. Kain (2005) also asserts that disruptions and attacks on oil pipelines cut Nigerian oil production by more than 20% in 2004 alone (see Section 3.5.1 on resistance from oil bearing communities). Drawing on the discussions relating to oil price shocks, militancy and oil wealth in the Niger Delta region, it is pertinent to note that children in the region do not only suffer from the volatility of crude oil prices affecting their general well-being but also from the volatility in the region (the specific situation of the Niger Delta children are considered in the later part of this chapter).

The general argument here is that, as noted earlier, the influx of oil revenue was assumed to be unleashing the nation's great potentials for growth and development, as occurred with some oil producing countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Norway that have derived significant benefits from the use of their oil revenues. However, the Nigerian oil wealth has only benefited an extremely selective sector of Nigerian society. The World Bank (2002) reports that approximately 80% of the Nigerian oil wealth is owned by 1% of the population (with 70% of private wealth held abroad), whilst the other 20% of revenues is spread out over the remaining 99% of the population, "leaving Nigeria with the second lowest per capita oil export earnings put at $212 (N28, 408) per person in 2004"[7]. Thus, high levels of income inequality and large gaps exist between the poor and non-poor (Aigbokhan, 2000). The polarisation of inequality in Nigeria aggravates the

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[7] Quoted in Watts (2008)

absence or failure of key sectors such as education, health and transportation, amongst non-wealthy social groups (NHDR, 2008/9). These arguments have also been reflected in the empirical chapters of this study which emphasised that the children in rural communities of the Niger Delta region have been significantly affected by poor access to key basic rights which they need.

From the foregoing, several studies have suggested that one key factor for addressing the problems associated with oil revenue dependency is the need to take effective control of the endemic culture of gross corruption, which has led to many years of mismanagement of public resources in the Nigerian government (Ribadu, 2005). Watts (2008) stresses that due to the corruption practices and the oil wealth boom; there exist an opaque pattern of accountability between the federal government and the oil companies. For Watts, at least $100 billion of the $600 billion in oil revenues collected since 1960 have simply "gone missing"[8]. Watts also concludes that the euphoria of oil wealth was accompanied by the unaccountability of the federal government and the consequent social deprivation (Watts, 1999).

Although the federal government has taken major steps towards delegitimizing corrupt practices by enforcing anti-corruption legislation, corruption is still a major impediment to socio-economic developments in Nigeria. Thus, despite the anti-corruption Acts in place, in 2004, the former head of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, announced that 40% of Nigeria's $20 billion annual oil income was lost as a result of corruption and mismanagement (Reuters Report, 2004). More importantly, the task of sustaining these anti-corruption campaigns, coupled with the genuine intention of re-directing recovered public funds looted to provide goods and services remains a great challenge (UNICEF, 2011c).

Having explored discussions on Nigeria's oil revenue and the socio-economic impacts of oil revenue dependence, the next section will focus on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, which is home to the majority of Nigeria's oil reserves.

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[8] Paul Wolfowitz in 'The Price of our Oil addiction' by Watts (2008)

3.3 The Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta Region (NDR) is the richest part of Nigeria in terms of natural resources, with proven reserves of crude oil and natural gas, as well as extensive forests, good agricultural land and abundant fish resources (World Bank, 1995; Doyle, 2004; NDDC, 2004). The region is bordered to the South by the Atlantic Ocean and to the East by Cameroon, occupying a surface area of about 112,110 km² which amounts to about 12% of Nigeria's total landmass (Dublin-Green *et al.*, 1999; NDDC 2004; National Population Census, 2006; UNDP, 2006). Based on its wealth of resources, the region should be a colossal economic pool of both foreign and local prominence. However, despite the exploration guidelines[9] existing in Nigeria, results from a 2006 study carried out by a team of Nigerian and international environmental experts reported the region to be one of the most severely polluted places on the face of the earth[10].

Other than the environmental devastation, several studies have also focused on the extreme poverty in the region. According to Dode (2011), despite the region's significant contribution to the national economy, especially in terms of revenue and foreign exchange earnings, the Niger Delta people form a significant segment of the poorest people in the world. A World Bank (1995) study on the depth of poverty in the region also noted that the per capita GNP is below the national average of US$280; the region has high mortality rates from water-borne diseases, poor sanitation and only about 20–24% of rural communities and fewer than 60% of urban communities have access to safe drinking water, while less than 20% of the region is accessible by a good road, even during the dry season. Similarly, a 2006 UNDP report concluded that the Niger Delta is "a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructures and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth, and squalor and endemic conflict" (UNDP, 2006:25).

There is also a general assumption by international institutions and scholars that oil exploration activities are responsible for the poverty, ecological damage and poor

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[9] Environmental Impact Assessment Act of 1992 (EIA), Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act of 1988 (FEPA), Environmental Guidelines and Standards for the protection Industry in Nigeria established in 2000 (EGASPIN)

[10] According to a study carried out by a team of Nigerian and international environmental experts in 2006; the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, the WWF UK and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy with the Federal Ministry of Environment (Abuja), "Niger Delta Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Project Scoping Report", May 2006

sustainability of the environment (see Aaron, 2005; UNDP, 2006; Ebeku, 2008; Amnesty International, 2009; Benedict, 2011). Particularly, a UNDP report stated that, "the conditions of rural communities where crude oil is produced are deplorable, with severe environmental degradation and no access to safe drinking water, electricity and roads" (UNDP, 2006:iii). The reality as will be evident in this study is the negative experiences that oil exploration interventions also have on the lives of children in the Niger Delta communities. Consequently, the region's local people have often felt excluded from mainstream development, as the oil wealth has not alleviated the crushing poverty, neglect and deprivation in the region that produces it (UNDP, 2006). According to Watts (2004), the increasing deprivation has angered the local people from the region who have often engaged in conflicts with the federal government and oil companies. For Watts and other authors such as Osuoka (2007) and Enweremadu (2008), the culture of corruption and opportunism contributes to the quandary in the region, which has robbed the Niger Delta people of any real benefits from the substantial revenues but enriched those who control state power such as the federal and regional governments and transnational oil companies.

At this juncture, it is imperative to bring into discussion, the definition of the Niger Delta region with the aim of bringing to light some of the peculiarities of the states that make up the region.

3.3.1 'Geographic' and 'Political' Definitions of the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta region can be defined in geographic or political terms. To clarify these meanings, the geographic definition of the Niger Delta region (comprising six states) is made of the 'core states' as asserted in the operational area of the defunct Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). This classification limits the region to the six south-south zones namely: Rivers, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Delta and Edo (Ibeanu, 2006; UNDP, 2006). However, the definition stems from the argument that these south-south states represent the bulk of onshore oil production in the Niger Delta, and bear the greatest brunt of environmental pollution from oil exploration activities (Omotola, 2010).

On the other hand, the political definition of the Niger Delta comprises of nine[11] states which includes the geographic Niger Delta, and three additional states namely; Abia and Imo states in the south-east; and Ondo state in the south-west (Omotola, 2007). While the political definition recognizes that the states in the south-east and south-west have reduced quantities of crude oil production when compared to those in the south-south, these states are nonetheless, considered as significant parts of the region. Consequently, irrespective of whether production has started or not, the political definition encompasses all nine oil-producing states of the Niger Delta region (Omotola, 2010).

Authors such as Akpabio and Akpan (2010) assert that the confusion and variation over the nomenclature of the prevailing definitions stem from the evolution of the oil economy and hardly existed before the growth in oil exploitation. As put by Djebah (2003), squabbles over oil wealth and conflicts over the defining of political boundaries suddenly assumed great significance within the states in the Niger Delta region. In particular, the increase in national oil revenue and discussions on how much revenue should be allocated to a state if they are considered part of the region have also been linked with arguments over the definition of the Niger Delta region (UNDP, 2006). Resulting from these arguments there has been no consensus even among the people of the region over the definition of the Niger Delta region.

The conceptual controversy notwithstanding, for the purpose of this study, the Niger Delta will be defined within its political sense which comprises of nine states rather than its strict geographical sense (see shaded region in Figure, 3.1). This political definition is widely accepted officially and was adopted by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), its principal intervention agency formulated to address the developmental and environmental concerns of the region (Ibeanu, 2006).

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[11] In 2012, the federal government announced Anambra state as the 10th oil producing State of the Niger Delta region (Punch, 2012). However, this thesis will present the NDR as 9 states mainly as the announcement is amidst controversies and there are hardly any current statistical data available on Anambra state when discussing the NDR.

Figure 3.1: Map of Nigeria Showing the Niger Delta

Source: Idemudia (2009)

3.3.2 Ecological Setting

Apart from its oil and gas resources, the NDR is rich in biodiversity, boasting of diverse plant and animal species, including various species of rare and endangered flora and fauna (Nnadozie, 1995). The World Bank (1995:38) states that the "full significance of the delta's biodiversity remains unknown because new ecological zones and species continue to be uncovered and major groups, such as higher plants and birds, remain unstudied in large areas". The region is also the third largest wetland in the world (after the Netherlands and the Mississippi), and the largest in Africa (NDDC, 2004). There are five main ecological zones in the region making the region one of the richest biological areas in the world (Doyle, 2004; NDDC, 2004). There are coastal barrier islands, mangroves, freshwater swamp forest, lowland rainforests, and the montane habitats ecological zones (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Areas of Ecological Zones in the Niger Delta Region
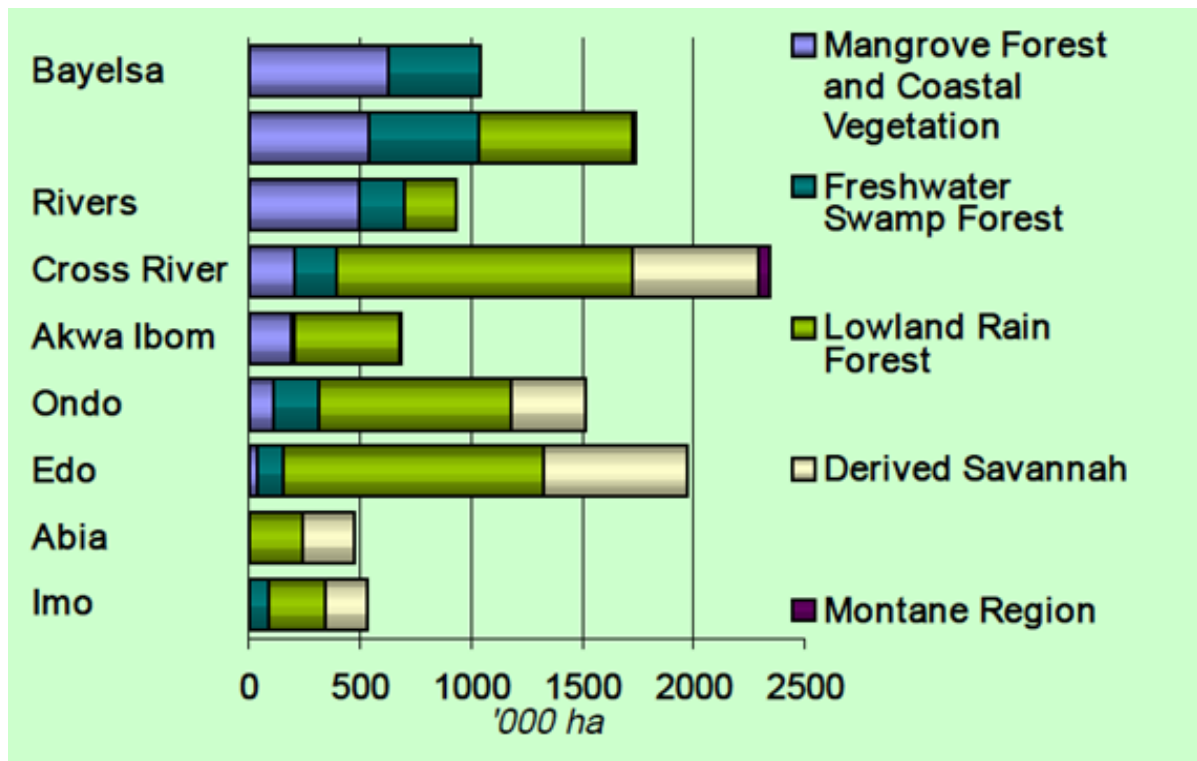
Source: NDDC (2004)

The coastal barrier islands zone, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, is made up of a chain of sandy barrier islands, which are separated by numerous estuaries and inlets. In general, they are 16 to 20 km wide, extending along the outer coastline from the Benin River to the Imo River. These islands are usually less than one metre above sea level, thus the high topography tide keeps them from the tidal influence of the marine and brackish waters. However, they are also often flooded during the year when rainfall is heavy (UNDP, 2006). Advancing inland, another zone consisting of evergreen tropical trees is the mangrove swamp forests zone, which is the third largest in the world and Africa's largest (Udo, 1970; World Bank, 1995; HRW, 1999).

Among the five ecological zones, the mangrove has the most economic potential, accommodating the most essential fauna and flora (Ebeku, 2005). The mangrove swamps are centrally located within a complex and sensitive ecosystem, which is fundamental to the fishing industry and the local economy of the Niger Delta people (Ebeku, 2005). Although, the mangrove swamp zone is practically uninhabited except for fishing camps, most of the zone is at elevations of less than one metre, and it is generally muddy and under tidal influence (UNDP, 2006). The largest concentrations of these swamps are to be

found between Sapele and Warri (Delta State), and between Port Harcourt and Abonnema (Rivers State). It is through the intricate network of creeks in this region that the water systems of Nigeria's two most important rivers, the Niger and Benue flow into the Atlantic Ocean (Udo, 1970). Amongst the mangrove's essential resources are fertile soils that have supported the cultivation of rice, sugarcane, cassava, yams and beans for decades. In addition, the zone provides herbs for medicines, healthy fisheries, wood for fuel and shelter, tannins and dyes and critical wildlife habitats (Essential Action and Global Exchange, 2000).

Proceeding further inland, are two habitats namely the freshwater swamp forest and lowland rainforests. The freshwater swamp forests are the most extensive in west and central Africa and cover approximately 17,000 km² or about half of the Delta region. The zone is the region's major source of timber and forest products and contains important areas for rare and endangered wildlife (NDDC, 2004). However, the zone is characterized by seasonal flooding, which causes it be permanently swampy and under flooding from freshwater. The region has more freshwater fish species than any coastal system in West Africa (Doyle, 2004) and its species of wildlife are usually different from those of the flood forest zone (UNDP, 2006). Due to its rich biodiversity, the zone provides economic sustenance to the local population and local residents tend to use the more flood-prone areas for the seasonal cultivation of cassava, vegetables, cocoyam and other crops. However, the high rate of deforestation has hampered the freshwater swamp forest and in addition, the construction of access channels through waterways and swamps has in some cases, caused salt water to flow into freshwater systems destroying them and making the water unfit for drinking and domestic purposes (Amnesty International, 2009).

The lowland rainforests zone on the other hand is the least swampy part of the region falling beyond the non-riverine or 'upland' areas and covering about 7,400 km of the Niger Delta region (NDDC, 2004; UNDP, 2006). Evidence suggests that very little lowland remains and only a few areas are significant in size or in species diversity, such as the Ebubu forest (World Bank, 1995). The derived savannah with its few scattered trees, savannah-type grasses and shrubs, is found in the northern part of the Niger Delta region. The trees in this zone do not often grow up to maturity due to the constant human pressure. However, the vegetation type generally still possesses many species of herbs and shrubs (NDDC, 2004). With regards to the montane zone, this is mainly found in the northeastern

part of Cross River state around the Obudu/Sankwala area. Its unique natural resources and exclusive biodiversity makes it attractive for eco-tourism, but it does not have species diversity when compared with other tropical forests (NDDC, 2004).

Despite the evidence of huge natural resources, the region has a difficult landscape and its ecosystem is very susceptible to changes that can trigger imbalance (NDDC, 2004). The case of the region's sensitive and fragile ecosystem is such that years before Nigeria's independence in 1960, the colonial masters of Nigeria documented the complicated terrain of the area and the difficulty faced in developing a conventional transportation system via rivers, creeks and mosquito-infested dense swamps (Egborge, 2000; Ibeanu, 2000). Besides the difficult landscape, seasonal flooding and erosion cause further problems for the ecology of the region (HRW, 1999). During flooding, which in some areas lasts for over half the year, drinking water is frequently contaminated leading to a risk of water-borne diseases. It is reported that over 80% of the Delta is seasonally flooded (World Bank, 1995; NDDC, 2004). For instance, Zabbey (2006) notes a particular case of Port Harcourt city in Rivers State, which experienced an unprecedented flooding, that submerged houses, paralyzed economic activities and internally displaced some residents of the Mgbuoba, Diobu and Nkpolu areas.

Beyond the natural environmental problems, there is strong evidence that human-induced problems resulting from the advent of oil exploration activities have further exacerbated the ecological problems of the Niger Delta region. Reports by the World Bank (1995); HRW (1999); UNDP (2006) and Amnesty International (2009) have described at length the activities and impacts of oil exploration, which can often result in oil spills, leading to loss of biodiversity and degraded forests. Accordingly, these reports have established that the mangrove forest is particularly sensitive to oil contamination because the soil soaks up the oil like a sponge and re-releases it every rainy season, making clean-up "extremely difficult" (World Bank, 1995; HRW, 1999:61). According to Nwilo and Badejo (2005), oil spills have major consequences that included the destruction of over 340 hectares of mangrove resulting from the 1980 blowout of a Texaco offshore station, in which over 400,000 barrels (estimated at 8.4 million US gallons) of crude oil spilled into the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, the process of designing causeways and canals by the oil industries affect the hydrology of the seasonally flooded freshwater swamp and the brackish water of the mangrove forest, yet again destroying fishing

grounds, crops and damaging drinking water paths (UNDP, 2006). The later sections of this chapter will consider the impacts of oil exploration activities in more detail.

3.3.3 The People

The Niger Delta region is extremely heterogeneous with respect to its rich culture and ethnicity. According to the NDDC (2004), the region is composed of about 40 different ethnic groups, who speak over 250 different languages and dialects. The numerous ethnic groups include Ijaws, Ogonis, Ikwerres, Etches, Ekpeyes, Ogbas, Engennes, Obolos, Isoko, Nembes, Okrikans, Kalabaris, Urhobos, Itsekiris, Igbos, Ika-Igbos, Ndoni, Oron, Ibeno and Yorubas, Ibibios, Annangs and Efiks. Other groups include Ibibios, Anang, Efiks, Bekwarras and Binis. The heritage of the people is reflected in modes of dress, marriage, traditional culture and festivals.

This paragraph which discusses the linguistic and cultural groups in the region is largely drawn from the Niger Delta Human Development Report (UNDP, 2006:48). According to this report, the five major linguistic and cultural groups are: the Ijoid, Edoid, Delta Cross, Yoruboid and Igboid, and each are composed of numerous sub-groups. The Ijoid who are said to have the longest settlement history in the Niger Delta, are the most complex linguistically. Each of the numerous clans of this group has some linguistic and cultural distinctiveness. In certain cases, even villages within the same clan have linguistic differences. This group, which occupies virtually the whole of Bayelsa State, is also found in Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Edo and Ondo States. The Edoid group is made up of mainly, the Edo of Edo State, the Engenni and Apie-Atissa of Bayelsa State, and the Degema of Rivers State. Even within these groups, several sub-groups exist; many claim that they have their own individual identity. The Delta Cross comprises mainly the Ogoni, Ogba, Abua, Odual and Obolo/Andoni in Rivers State and the Ibibio, Oron and Ibeno of Akwa Ibom state. The Ibibio is the largest of these groups. The most well known, especially internationally, is the Ogoni because of its agitation for resource control and autonomy. The Yoruboid and the Igboid are the smallest groups in the Niger Delta despite the fact that they are two of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. The main Yoruboid groups are the Itsekiri of Delta State, and the Ilaje and Ikale in the borderlands of Ondo State. The main Igboid groups are the Ikwere, Ndoni, Egbema, Ogba and Ekpeye in Rivers State and the Ukuwani in Delta State.

The illustration above exemplifies the diversity and complexity of the number of local languages in the region. Perhaps more importantly, as shown in the next chapter, these clusters of languages which comprise several dialects have some practical implications for the challenges posed by language and communication, when collecting empirical data in this study.

3.3.4   Settlement Pattern

With a population of over 31 million people (see Table 3.1), the Niger Delta region covers 9 states, in 185 local government areas, across 3000 communities (NDDC, 2004). However, the nature of the complex terrain in the region largely defines the settlement pattern. A careful analysis by NDDC (2004) indicated that due to the poor terrain of the region and the population density, the accessibility of dry land determines the settlement pattern. As a result, the region's difficult topography causes people to gather in small rural communities (UNDP, 2006). The NDDC (2004:53) also notes that a majority of settlements in these small rural communities exist with close groups of "small buildings housing 50 to 500 people, most of whom are farmers or fisher folk". While central services such as markets, churches and schools can be present in the town centres of these communities. The axiomatic importance is that the vast majority of these rural settlements lack basic amenities such as healthcare and effective transportation systems (UNDP, 2006). Additionally, larger settlements are often away from the rural residences, where better drainage facilities and accessibility exist.

Table 3.1: Niger Delta Population Data (demographic statistics)

States	Land Area(km^2)	Male Population	Female population	Total population 2006
Abia	4,877	1,434,193	1,399,806	2,833,999
Akwa Ibom	6,806	2,044,510	1,875,698	3,920,208
Bayelsa	11,007	902,648	800,710	1,703,358
Cross River	21,930	1,492,465	1,396,501	2,888,966
Delta	17,163	2,161,157	1,990,036	4,098,391
Edo	19,698	1,640,461	1,577,871	3,218,332
Imo	5,165	2,032,286	1,902,613	3,934,899
Ondo	15,086	1,761,263	1,679,761	3,441,024
Rivers	10,378	2,710,665	2,474,735	5,185,400
Total	112,110	16,179,648	15,097,731	31,277,379
Nigeria	910,770	71,709,859	68,293,683	140,003,542

Source: Adapted from the National Population Census (2006)

3.3.5 Economy

The economy of the Niger Delta region is largely driven by the informal sector with a majority of the population engaged in forestry, trade, transport, construction, farming, fishing and other activities (UNDP, 2006). Among these, the main economic activities of the region are farming (land based) and fishing activities (water based) which together account for about 90% of all activities in the area (FOS, 1985; NDDC, 2004; UNDP, 2006). Reports from the FOS (1985) maintain that agricultural activity which revolves around the family is quite rudimentary as farming techniques have remained relatively

unchanged over the years and over 90% of farmers are subsistence farmers operating with traditional methods such as the land rotation or bush fallow system, slash and burn techniques/shifting cultivation systems. These farmers generally rely on basic tools such as machetes, hoes, spades and shovels on small landholdings (averaging approximately two hectares per family). While farming has been the major occupation of most upland dwellers (like the Ogoni, Ibibio, Urhobo and Isoko), most riverine dwellers (notably the Ijaw and the Itsekiri) are, or have been, fisher folk (Udo, 1970; Onakuse and Lenihan, 2007).

However, several studies such as the UNDP report have argued that decades of oil prospecting and exploitation in the Niger Delta, have significantly damaged the farmlands and fishing grounds of the region and debilitated other traditional occupations such as lumber, crafts and small-scale agriculturally-based activities, amongst others. For instance, rubber plantations that once covered thousands of hectares of land in Edo and Delta States were cleared for oil exploration activities. Eteng (1997:4) holds a similar view by arguing that "oil exploration and exploitation has over the decades impacted disastrously on the socio-physical environment of the Niger Delta oil-bearing communities, massively threatening the subsistent peasant agricultural economy and the environment and hence the entire livelihood and basic survival of the people". Focusing on the implication of oil exploration activities for livelihoods, other authors assert that, given the role of agriculture in the region, the destruction of the traditional rural economy of the Niger Delta people has resulted in high incidences of poverty amongst the people (Aluko, 2004; Omoriodion, 2004; Ite, 2005). In a similar vein, a report by the NDDC (2004a) established that with the decline in the traditional means of a livelihood, not only have farming and fishing become unattractive because of weak earnings relative to the oil sector, but the region is also experiencing a high rate of youth unemployment and a diminishing quality of education. The insights on the implication of oil exploration activities for livelihoods in the region are further examined in the empirical chapters of this study with a view to highlighting its relevance to the experiences of children.

3.3.6   Social Services

To re-iterate, several studies such as Ibaba (2010), have established that for an estimated regional population of nearly 31 million people, the state of social infrastructures in the region is appalling. A range of reports and studies have also documented a debilitating lack

of adequate medical facilities, efficient market services, shopping facilities, good water, power supply and transportation systems (HRW, 1999; UNDP, 2006; Amnesty International, 2009). The UNDP (2006) suggests that in 2002, only 27% of people in the Niger Delta had safe drinking water and there was one doctor per 82,000 people, falling to one doctor per 132,000 people in some areas, especially the rural areas, which is more than three times worse than the national average of 40,000 people per doctor. Another report by the NDDC (2004a) revealed that many of the mud houses (which is the most dominant form of rural housing) use latrines in the bush, while only about 11.2 % have toilets with septic tanks and very few houses having cement flooring. As discussed in Chapter Six, these assertions resonate with local people's feelings across the rural communities and particularly for children who have narrated stories about challenges faced from accessing social services in the region.

Throughout the cities in the region, some urban dwellings are also generally overcrowded, lacking in most elementary amenities and surrounded by poor sanitation. Worse still, less than 20% of the region is accessible by road and life expectancy at birth in the region stands at 43 compared to the national average of 47 (Ibeanu, 2008:98; Ojakorotu and Allen 2009:169; Aaron, 2010a:2). Many authors, notably Idemudia (2009) and Ibaba (2010), argue that the poor state of social services is connected to the poor record of the development projects embarked upon by the federal government and the oil companies in the region. Idemudia suggest that because traditional sources of livelihood (fishing and farming) have experienced a sustained decline over the years, with little or no investment in alternative sources of livelihood to stimulate the local economy, the need for social infrastructure in communities surpasses what is now being provided by oil companies. Idemudia exemplifies this in his study by noting that while the provision of services such as roads is a positive development, the local people are left unsatisfied because they lack clean water and their dilapidated roofs need repairs. He also cites the Ibom rice farm in Ikot Ebidang of Akwa Ibom state as an example of an inappropriate project that is barely operational, or sustainable for the local people. For Ibaba, he maintains that development projects, such as micro credit schemes to boost small-scale enterprise in areas of agriculture, have failed to assuage the strong concerns of oil-producing communities who also clamor for other needs such as improved healthcare delivery services and capacity-building skill development programme to provide sustainable development in the region.

Another point made by Idemudia is that the oil companies tend to use their community development initiatives as a business strategy rather than as a development tool. The views also reflected in the HRW (1999) report remarked that in some cases, oil companies have constructed roads to their wellheads and flow stations, which are partly for their own benefit and not necessarily for the benefit of the local community. The HRW report indicates that many of the development projects carried out in the region are not only incomplete or negligently carried out, but frequently their agendas are inappropriate for the needs of the communities where they are sited. The argument in this section also tends to suggest a major emphasis that development projects did not consider other categories such as 'children' mainly as these reports rarely ever mentioned child-specific designed programmes by oil companies in their host communities.

Having established that the local people in the region face significant challenges due to the presence of oil exploration activities in the region, the following section focuses on some more specific negative impacts.

3.4 Some Problems Associated With Oil Exploration Activities

Although studies and reports have documented a wide spectrum of harmful consequences associated with oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region (Moffat and Linden, 1995; World Bank, 1995; HRW, 1999; Okonta and Douglass, 2001, Amnesty International, 2009), this section will concentrate on specific impacts such as; loss of farmlands, oil spills, gas flaring and the pervasive poverty in the region.

3.4.1 Loss of Farmlands

One of the consequences of oil exploration activities has stemmed from the industry's need for significant amounts of land in the process of building oil production infrastructure such as the construction of export pipelines, tank farms, the laying of pipelines and the building of other oil facilities (Idemudia and Ite, 2006). Evidence shows that with the increase of oil wells in the region from less than 100 in the 1980s to over 600 by 2005, there has been a major surge in farmland acquisitions from the local people by oil companies (NDDC, 2004; Egberongbe *et al*., 2006; Edoho, 2008). Under these circumstances, the process of land acquisition tends to force a person to lose or forfeit their farmlands, which ultimately deprives the local people of their major source of livelihood (Ehiorobo and Audu, 2010). A typical illustration is the evidence that in 1995 alone, over 10,000 families and another

4,500 people lost their farmlands to either the installation of oil infrastructures or to oil spills (UNDP, 2006). As evidenced in Chapter Six, children talked about the negative impacts this practices has on their access to healthy food.

While several studies have accused oil companies of often alienating people from their lands during oil exploration activities, oil company representatives have reacted by arguing that the amount of land used for oil production is minimal by comparison with the total area of the region (HRW, 1999). However, as mentioned in the description of the ecology of the region, the area is short of land, especially cultivable and habitable land. Consequently, the so-called minimal land acquisition by oil companies often results in competition amongst local people for scarce land resources. As put by the World Resources Institute (1992:30), "the more and more people exploit open-access resources in an often desperate struggle to provide for themselves and their families; they further degrade their environment, which further exacerbates poverty and threatens not only the economic prospects of future generations, but also the livelihoods, health and wellbeing of current populations".

Beyond the problems of alienating local people from their lands and competition for scarce resources, people are inadequately compensated for their land loss, which inevitably leads to economic difficulties and intensifies poverty (HRW, 1999; UNDP, 2006). In most land matters, the Nigeria Land Use Act of 1978[12] is relied on for land acquisitions and compensation (HRW, 1999). The problem with this Act however, is that it vests in the government the rights of ownership of all state lands, including those which were originally communal lands and were administered by traditional rulers and families. The Act also states that compensations are paid only for crops and improvements on lands acquired in the course of oil exploration and exploitation. The problems associated with the Land Use Act is worsened by government's nominal monitoring role in the agreed terms of compensation, leaving the oil companies to control almost entirely (HRW, 1999). By implication, the Act inevitably puts the affected landowners in an unequal bargaining position and obliges them to accept whatever compensation is offered by the companies in cases of land acquisition (HRW, 1999). Against this backdrop, the locals have often protested against the unfavourable compensation for land ruined or livelihood lost due to the Act (UNDP, 2006). A study by Ehiorobo and Audu (2010) on the use of the Land Use

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[12] Land Use Decree Act (1978), this act vests all land in the state through the office of the military governor of each state. The land is held in trust and administered through the government's authority to the use and benefit of all Nigerians.

Act in three states of the NDR reveals that 72% were dissatisfied with the implementation of the Land Use Act, while 79% were dissatisfied with the compensation that they received for their land acquisitions. The study by Ehiorobo and Audu also established that landowners were less impoverished prior to the period of oil exploration activities.

3.4.2   Oil Spills

As a result of the complex and extensive systems of pipelines (see Picture 3.1) running across the Niger Delta region, it has been observed that thousands of barrels of oil have spilled into the environment through pipeline damage and leakage (Duruigbo *et al.,* 2001).

Picture 3.1: Pipelines Running Directly Through Okrika[13] Community

Source: Photo by Kashi (2010)

According to Nwilo and Badejo (2005/2006), between 1976 and 1996, a total of 4,647 incidents resulted in the spillage of approximately 2,369,470 barrels of oil into the environment: 6%, 25% and 69% of these occurred in land, swamp and offshore environments respectively. Another report from the NNPC estimates that an average of approximately 2,300 cubic metres of oil are spilled in 300 separate incidents every year (HRW, 1999). Egberongbe *et al*. (2006) also reports that between 1976 and 2005 Nigeria recorded 9,107 oil spillage incidents, which led to the spillage of 3,121,909.8 barrels of oil.

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[13] Okrika is a troubled area near Port Harcourt that has oil, refineries, pipelines and violence.

Furthermore, in 2006, a team of experts[14] stated that as many as 9 to 13 million gallons of oil have been spilled into the Niger Delta over the last six decades. They suggest that this amount exceeds the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill in which an estimated 10.8 million gallons of oil was spilled into the waters off the Alaskan coast (Amnesty International, 2009). Table 3.2 presents a list of the major spillage incidents which occurred between 1979 and 2005. Although thereafter, there have been other major oil spills in the region.

Table 3.2: Summary of some Oil Spills in the Niger Delta, 1979-2005

Episode	Month/Year	State	Quantity Spilt in Barrels
Forcados terminal oil spills	July 1979	Delta	570,000
Funiwa No.5 well blow out	Jan 1980	Rivers	400,000
Oyekama oil spillage	May 1980	Rivers	10,000
System 2c Warri-Kaduna Pipeline rupture at Abudu	Nov 1982	Edo	18,000
Sohika oil spill	August 1983	Rivers	10,000
Idoho oil spill	Jan 1988	Akwa-Ibom	40,000
Jones Creek oil spill	March 1998	Delta	21,000
Jesse oil spill	October 1998	Delta	10,000
Etiama oil spill	May 2000	Bayelsa	11,000
Aghada oil spill	Dec 2003	Rivers	Unknown
Ewan oil spill	August 2004	Ondo	Unknown
Ughelli oil spill	August 2005	Delta	10,000
	TOTAL		**1,100,00**

Source: UNDP (2006:184); Opukri and Ibaba (2008:181)

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[14] Niger Delta Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Project, Phase I Scoping Report, May 2006, conducted by Nigerian Conservation Foundation, WWF UK and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy, with the Federal Ministry of Environment (Abuja).

Oil spillages can be categorized into four groups: minor, medium, major and disaster (Ntukekpo, 1996; Egberongbe, *et al*., 2006). Minor spills takes place when the oil discharge is less than 25 barrels in inland waters or less than 250 barrels on land, offshore or coastal waters and the spillage does not pose a threat to public health or welfare. Medium and major spillages involve the discharge of 250 to 2,500 barrels on land or offshore and in coastal waters. A disaster refers to any uncontrolled well blowout, pipeline rupture or storage tank failure which poses an imminent threat to the public health. From Table 3.2 and Ntukekpo's categorization of oil spills, minor spills are not meant to pose problems to public health, however, a striking illustration from the HRW (1999) demonstrates that a minor spill can still expunge a year's food supply for a family, and hence decimate that family's income – not to mention its impacts on other immediate basic needs of the family such as health. As re-iterated throughout this thesis and reflected in the empirical chapters of this study, children are often the worst hit in these incidents when families are affected. As shown in Picture 3.2, oil spills can cause extensive, economic and ecological effects such as the depletion of forest resources, the destruction of freshwater ecological systems, the loss of biodiversity and the impairment of human life (Aroh *et al.,* 2010).

Picture 3.2: Ecological Impacts of Oil Spillages

(a) Amukpe oil spill in Sapale   (b) Adeje petroleum spill July 2000

Source: ERA/FoEN (2002)   Source: Ekeh (2000)

Focusing on some major spills, the January 1998 Mobil spillage was reported by the Human Rights Watch (HRW, 1999) to have contaminated local people's water and food, thereby causing about one hundred villagers from communities to be hospitalized. In this incident, local residents complained that fish tasted of paraffin (kerosene), indicating hydrocarbon contamination. Another major Shell spillage, which occurred in 1998 and resulted from worn out bolts in two high-pressure pipelines, was reported to have spread across over 50 fishing settlements and into the Atlantic Ocean. Local people claimed that poisoned dead fish could be seen floating in the creeks and the fishermen complained that they could no longer fish and had no other means of livelihood generation (NDHERO, 1998).

In a bid to explain the causes of oil spills, an assessment by Nwilo and Badejo (2006) revealed that 50% of oil spills were due to corrosion, 28% to sabotage and 21% to oil production operations. The remaining 1% of oil spills is due to factors such as: engineering drills, inability to effectively control oil wells, failure of machines, and inadequate care in loading and unloading oil vessels. These figures have been highly contested, particularly as some authors argue that spillages are at least ten times higher than the figures that have been reported. For instance, Steiner (2010) notes that oil companies underreport the

amount of oil spillages in order to avoid remediation and paying compensation to affected people. In 2012, Amnesty International[15] argued that, based on private and independent assessments, the 2008 Bodo spill was 60 times more damaging than had been claimed by Shell. Resulting from this challenge by Amnesty International, Bodo residents, who complained that the damage from the oil spill has caused long-term devastation to their livelihoods and wellbeing, have sued Shell (Vidal, 2012). Apart from the 'underreporting' approach often adopted by oil companies, Ogbinigwe (1996) also notes that oil companies tend to hide behind the cover that oil spillages are acts of sabotage to avoid paying any compensation. This is because, in accordance with Nigerian law [16], there is no compensation paid in relation to spillages caused by sabotage on the grounds that, to pay compensation creates an incentive to damage oil installations and harm the environment.

Given this, claims that a spillage has occurred as a result of sabotage have become highly controversial. For instance, various environmental and human rights groups such as Amnesty International (2009), Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (2002) and Human Rights Watch (1999) have argued that the figures regarding sabotage and/or vandalization of pipelines are inaccurate and that data on sabotage heavily relied on misleading and unacceptable oil company accounts. A recent case is the controversial report in which the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) claimed that 98% of the oil spilled from its facilities in the Niger Delta over the five years between 2005 and 2009 resulted from sabotage or leaks caused when thieves damaged pipelines and wellheads. In 2011, environmental groups such as Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth International contested these claims by Shell and consequently filed a complaint against Shell for alleged breaches of basic standards for responsible business set out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Soon after, Shell revised its sabotage claims from 98% to 70%. Its new report thus claims that 70% of all oil spilled resulted from sabotage or leaks while less than 30% came from operational spills i.e. spills due to corrosion, human error and equipment failure (Amnesty International, 2011; ThisDay News, 2011). Just like the difficulties reflected by local people in relation

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[15] Non-governmental organisation focused on enhancing human rights

[16] Petroleum Production and Distribution Anti-Sabotage Decree No. 35 of 1975. This decree made an offence of 'sabotage in respect of wilful acts calculated to prevent, disrupt or interfere with the production or distribution of petroleum products punishable'. This law provided for trial under a military tribunal with possible death sentence or imprisonment of up to 21 years. The Miscellaneous Offences Decree No. 20 of 1984 also provided the death penalty for the sabotage of oil installations. This decree was amended in 1986 and the death sentence was changed to life imprisonment. Apart from anti-sabotage legislation, there were also environmental laws.

to the Land Use Act, state complicity is also argued to be a problem in relation to the Anti-Sabotage Decree of 1975. While not refuting that sabotage occurs, it is clear that by leaving the determination of whether sabotage has occurred in the hands of the oil companies themselves increases the chances of injustice when local people become 'double victims' by having their livelihoods destroyed by oil spills and being wrongfully held liable for those same spillages. As argued in Chapter One, within the context of oil spill reports, many studies have focused on the narratives of local people while children's experiences have not been paid much attention. It is thus important to examine in detail children voices concerning these issues as presented and discussed in the empirical chapters of this study.

3.4.3   Gas Flaring

Gas is routinely flared in the course of producing and processing oil but the immense flames produced can have a devastating effect on the environment of the region. The World Bank reported that Nigeria flares 75% of the gas it produces (which translates to approximately 2.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas burned daily) and re-injects only 12% to enhance oil recovery (World Bank, 2004). Gas is flared rather than utilized in Nigeria due to unsustainable exploration practices and a lack of gas utilization infrastructure in the country. According to Omotola (2010), this enormous waste, valued at $2.5 billion annually also represents 40% of Africa's natural gas consumption. In the international gas flaring scale (see Figure 3.3), Nigeria is ranked the second highest gas-flaring nation, behind Russia with about 532 billion cubic feet (Energy Information Administration, 2010:6).

Figure 3.3: Comparative Data on Gas Flaring as at 2008
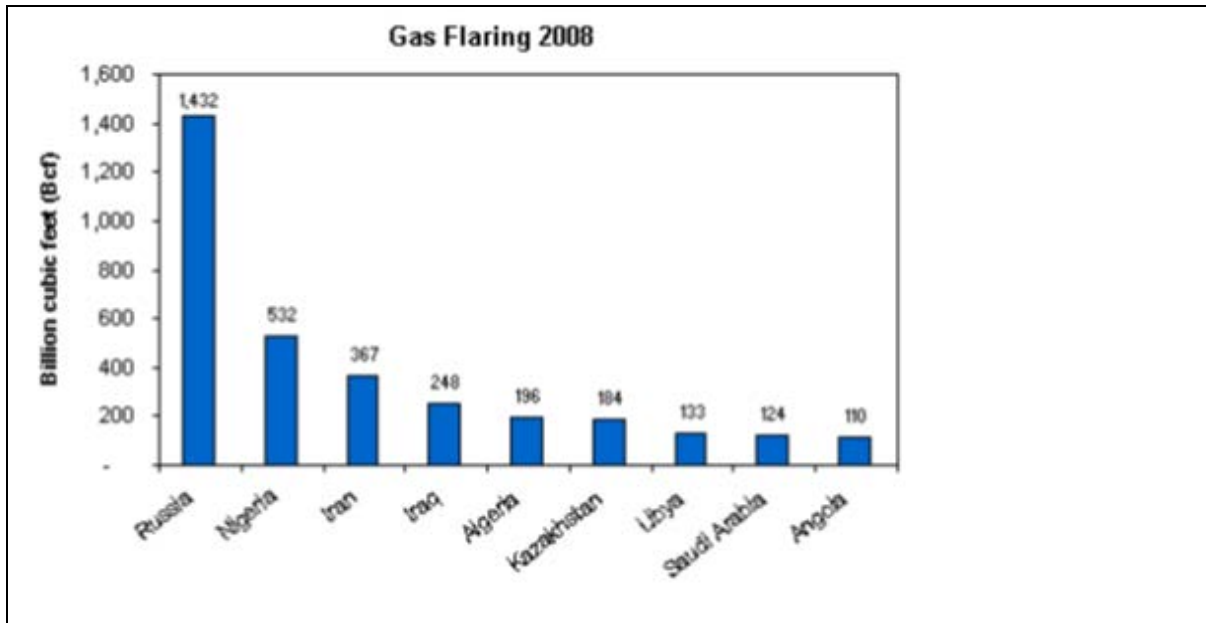
Notably, starting from 1960 there have been long and drawn-out attempts to enact legislation and set deadlines to end gas flaring. However, a solution has remained elusive due to the apparent lack of concern on the part of both successive federal governments and the oil corporations themselves (ThisDay Live, 2011). For instance, the government's plans to end gas flaring in 2008 failed as companies were unable to meet the deadlines that were set. UNDP report (2006) argues that, apart from the monumental waste of a valuable resource associated with gas flaring, it also results in air and thermal pollution that damages biodiversity. Similarly, a study by Oluwole *et al*. (1996) on air pollutants in the Niger Delta region indicates that the practice of burning off natural gases causes acid rain. Not only is acid rain known to contribute to global warming, various studies add that it also damages or hinders agricultural production on which many of the region's inhabitants rely (UNDP, 2006; Asuni, 2009b).

An assessment of the impacts of gas flaring in the region by the UNDP denotes that the flares are also associated with loud noise; bright light and heat on a continuous basis (for 24 hours a day) with no respite at night (see Picture 3.3). Consequently, communities near these flares are deprived of even the comfort of the night's natural darkness and this is also harsh for nocturnal animals.

Picture 3.3: Woman Baking Food in the Heat of a Gas Flare

Source: Kashi (2010) [17]

Omotola (2010) also adds that gas flaring, which has become a constant source of worry in the region, exposes the local people to major health risks. According to Omotola (2006:11), the flaring of gas into the atmosphere releases gaseous pollutants such as carbon dioxide, chlorine, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, acid aerosols and beryllium. These pollutants have degradable potentials with health implications such as headaches, heart problems or irritation depending on the particular pollutants in individual oil producing areas. Other studies have pointed out that these health impacts are further exacerbated when gas is flared right next door to homes that lack electricity and people living in impoverished village settlements without hospitals or clean running water (UNDP, 2006). In this study, the way children narrate their experiences and explain the negative impacts resulting from gas flares and acid rain (see Chapter Six) further provides a useful basis to comprehend the challenges faced by the local people in the region.

3.4.4 Pervasive Poverty

As noted earlier, in spite of the region's phenomenal oil and gas resources and the contribution that these make to national wealth, pervasive poverty has remained a dominant feature for the people of the region as these vast revenues have barely reached

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[17] The oil town of Afiesere in Warri North district of the Niger Delta, local Urohobo people bake "krokpo-garri", or tapioca in the heat of a gas flare. However, pollutants from the flare can cause serious health problems.

the vast majority of the Niger Delta region's population. Aaron (2005) points out that Nigeria has earned in excess of $400 million in net profits from over 50 years of oil production in the NDR, yet these vast revenues have not resulted in any appreciable advances in socio-economic development in the region. Ross (2003) also contends that since 2000, average per capita income in the NDR has remained at less than one U.S. dollar per day and argues that poverty levels in the oil-producing communities have actually risen even as oil production has expanded in the Niger Delta.

Omotola (2010) argue that the presence of the oil resource in the region is largely responsible for the pervasive poverty suffered in the region. In his thesis, Omotola established that, as oil production increased with its attendant ecological degradation and pollution, so did the incidence of poverty increase. Furthermore, as expressed by the UNDP (2006:59), with poor quality of life, economic stagnation and widespread unemployment, "the true levels of poverty in the region is bound to be underestimated mainly as poverty itself has become a way of life in the region". Clearly, while oil exploration activities may not be the only cause of poverty in the region, due for example to the difficult terrains within the region, exploration activities have certainly adversely affected the main livelihoods of the local people, such as agricultural activities. It is clear, however, that it is a combination of issues (such as the neglect of the region by the federal government and other internal political factors) and not only the devastation of livelihoods caused by the oil companies, that are the source of the poverty that continues to plague the Niger Delta region today (Ibeanu, 1997; HRW, 1999; Owabukereyule, 2000).

Having established some of the adverse impacts of oil exploration activities, the next section will look at the reactions to these problems by local communities, the Nigerian government and the oil companies.

3.5   Responses to the Problems of Oil Exploration Activities

As a result of their perceived neglect in the midst of plenty for many years, local people in the region's communities have sought to protest and have clamored for re-negotiations of the power relations established since before Nigeria's independence in 1960 (Watts, 2004; Obi, 2005). In more recent times, these protests have made the region the epicentre of violent conflicts as the intensification of the struggle seems to have correlated with the local population's increasing awareness of the adverse social and environmental impacts of

petroleum operations. In response, efforts have been made by the oil companies and government agencies both to enact policies to encourage the development of the region and to quell violent conflicts. However, these efforts have largely failed, not least because of a generalized failure to communicate adequately with local communities and to respond to their concerns.

3.5.1   Local People's Responses- Oil Communities

According to Katz (2004), various circumstances call for and create a range of responses such as revanchism, resilience, reworking, and resistance. In this section, actions by the local people situate the discussions in Katz's acts of 'resistance,' which includes political movements and oppositions, often resulting from failure to deliver promises. To understand the impetus behind the community struggles that have been generated over the years, discussions will focus on some of the early movements in the region (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2009).

One of the pioneers in the history of minority struggles was Chief Dappa Biriye, founder of the first Ijaw political party, the Niger Delta Congress (NDC) in 1957 (Enemugwem, 2009; Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2009). At the London Constitutional Conference in 1958, Chief Dappa Biriye led a delegation protesting about the political marginalization of the minority ethnic nationalities of the Niger Delta people who, they argued, found themselves side-lined by the three dominant regions of East, West and North Nigeria (Ojakorotu and Gilbert, 2010). This partly informed the creation of the Henry-Willink-led Minority Rights Commission in 1957, which was the first constitutional step taken to develop and address the fears of the people of the Niger Delta region, eventually resulting in the Willink report of 1958, which remarked that the Niger Delta is "poor, backward and neglected" needing special attention (UNDP, 2006:30). As a result, the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) was established in 1961 to address the recommendations of the Willink report. However, this effort failed to provide demonstrable developmental results.

Following this, in 1964, the NDC representing the Ijaw minority, failed to secure any seats in the federal general elections, thereby losing out to the Eastern region government which was dominated by the Igbos. This situation and the fact that youths in the region were frustrated with the state of underdevelopment in the NDR, spearheaded a violent campaign led by Isaac Adaka Boro in 1966, with the aim of ending the political marginalization of

the region (Osaghae *et al*., 2007). Isaac Adaka Boro (a 28-year-old ex-policeman) and his men (all Ijaw activists), formed an organisation known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) and declared the Niger Delta Republic as an independent Republic, comprising the Ijaw area and its territorial waters. Amongst other requirements, the NDVS demanded the cancellation of all crude-oil-related agreements and directed the oil companies to stop exploration in their area (Boro, 1986).

In line with the Niger Delta Republic declaration, the NDVS fought Nigerian federal troops, closed oil installations and blew up pipelines. Their operations were eventually squashed by federal troops on the twelfth day of the conflict. The NDVS combatants were tried for treason convicted and sentenced to death in June 1966 but were subsequently released from jail in August 1967 (Osaghae *et al*., 2007). The NDVS rebellion, now famous as the Twelve Day Revolution, marked the beginning of the Niger Delta's struggle for autonomy, resource control and development (Onduku 2001; Akpan and Akpabio 2003).

It is however pertinent to point out that the use of the term 'youth' has been highly controversial in the African context. As argued in the preceding chapters, despite the adoption of a child definition in Nigerian legislation as any individual under the age of 18, the youths in Nigeria can often include individuals below the age 18. For instance, some reports on the demographic statistics of the Niger Delta region, (see Section 3.6) have described the 'youth' as encompassing the broad category of ages 0-29. Furthermore, findings from this study evidenced that a 'youth' is a loose definition for individuals above the age of 14 (see Chapter 5.3). Thus, the tendency is that children defined within the broad categorisation of 0- 17 are often part of these youth movements.

Following the short-lived '12 day revolution', there was a near total absence of violent agitation in the region until the 1990s, when a new 'youth' movement began to gain prominence as they raised their voices against the unemployment, poverty, poor human rights and poor execution of economic reform policies in the region (Osaghae *et al*., 2007). In 1990, the Ogonis, under the leadership of the late Ken Saro Wiwa, formed the Movement for the Survival of Ogonis (MOSOP), which rose up against issues of pollution and resource destruction by the oil industries in Ogoniland (Watts, 1999). With at least 100 pumping stations and pipelines crisscrossing through farm lands and villages, Ogoniland has suffered a series of major oil spills and environmental pollutions, which have severely

damaged their land (HRW, 1999; Amnesty International, 2009). Like the earlier NDVS, the leaders of MOSOP presented the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) to the Nigerian federal military government in which the OBR detailed the plight of the Ogoni people, and among other things demanded political autonomy to participate in the affairs of the Nigerian Republic as a distinct and separate unit and the right to control and use a fair share of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development (MOSOP, 1992; Osaghae, 1995:326-327).

However, rather than negotiate or respond to the demands of MOSOP, the oil companies opted, in coalition with the federal government, to resort to repressive measures, including the prohibition of all public gatherings and the proclamation of a decree that declared demands for a right to self-determination and disturbance of oil producing activities as an act of treason punishable with death. On November 10, 1995, under the General Sani Abacha regime, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni rights activists were executed after a controversial trial (Amnesty International, 2009; Obi, 2009; Omotola, 2009). According to Ikelegbe (2001), the repression of the MOSOP agitation caused a brief lull in the activities of civil society in the region. However, the installation of a new regime in June 1998 (the General Abdulsalami Abubakar regime) revived civil society and heightened the Niger Delta struggle, leading to the formation of more activist groups such as the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC).

The IYC, a confederation of youth associations of the Ijaw ethnic group of Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States of the Niger Delta, was formed in late 1998, and at least in part was inspired by MOSOP. It agitated for self-freedom, justice and control of resources for the Ijaws of the Niger Delta (Ifedi and Anyu, 2011). The IYC is mainly known for its famous Kaiama Declaration of 11 December 1998, made at a meeting of 5,000 youths drawn from 500 communities, 40 clans and 25 organizations held at Kaiama in Bayelsa State (IYC, 1998). In the Kaiama declaration, the IYC indicated that all land and natural resources (including mineral resources) within the Ijaw territory belong to Ijaw communities and that henceforth they do not recognize all undemocratic decrees which were enacted without their participation and consent, such as the Land Use Decree and the Petroleum Decree, etc. The IYC in its declaration also demanded that all oil companies stop all oil exploration and exploitation activities in Ijawland and withdraw by 30 December 1998 (IYND, 1998; Ifedi and Anyu, 2011).

At the expiration of the 30 December 1998 deadline, the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar chose to respond with violence towards resolving the Kaiama declaration. What followed was a prolonged bloody clash between the IYC (through its militant wing known as the Egbesu Boys, whose name invokes the Ijaw god of war) and the federal troops. Although the IYC still exits, other armed interest groups such as the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger (MEND) emerged. Several studies such as Hanson (2007) have documented the activities of MEND's incessant attacks on oil facilities, foreign oil workers and the Nigerian military through hostage taking, kidnapping, illegal bunkering, cultism, militancy, sea piracy and the hijacking of vessels.

Some have argued that MEND, the most powerful militant group in the Delta (to date), has not been crippled by the government because unlike the NDPVF and previous groups, MEND has a de-centralized organizational structure and its leadership has evolved continuously since 2005 (Hanson, 2007). Consequently, the insecurity in the Niger Delta region is further exacerbated by the continuous military attacks by land, air and sea on those people who protest against oil spills, gas flaring and pollution (Ekanola, 2007).

While there exists extensive literature on the activities of militias in the region (Hanson, 2007; Osaghae, *et al*., 2007; Watts, 2007; Omotola, 2009), what needs to be emphasised here is the implication of the emergence of more armed groups on the lives of children. As mentioned in Section 3.2.1, the costs of attacks by militia groups are enormous for the Nigerian economy and these activities have adverse impacts on the lives on children, particularly in the Niger Delta region. For instance, within the first three months of 2006, over 29 Nigerian soldiers had been killed, and huge oil revenues had been lost due to the uprising generated by MEND (Omotola, 2010). As earlier indicated these negative shocks can have significant disadvantages on the execution of child –related programmes.

A report by Alemika, *et al*, (2005) also asserts that children from Niger Delta conflict regions have been orphaned from the loss of their parents or suffered displacement and in some cases; children have been killed. A typical case is the impacts of the reprisal attack by the Nigerian soldiers in the town of Odi, in Bayelsa State on the lives of children. This attack which resulted in the killing of hundreds in Odi town came after the abduction of six policemen by some Niger Delta youths. Alemika reported that children were not spared in

the killings as no distinction was drawn between children and adults by the rampaging Nigerian army.

One salient feature that has also emerged from the preceding discussions is that, although youths have spearheaded these protests, in many of the declarations and demands by these movements, the needs of adults have often overshadowed children's key needs or interests.

3.5.2 Federal Government Responses

The previous section briefly mentioned the use of state repression and militarization of the Niger Delta by the federal government and the oil companies as a response strategy to the resistance of the local people in the NDR (for more detail see Elbadawi, and Sambanis, 2000; Ifeka, 2000; Ibaba, 2008; Asuni, 2009a; Akpan, 2010; Omotola, 2010). Nonetheless, as noted in several studies, the approach of state repression has not quelled or completely expunged the conflicts in the region. Rather, there has been a surge in the number of militant groups clamouring for the political and economic development of the region (Osaghae, 1995; HRW, 1999/2002; Ikelegbe, 2006; Omotola, 2006/2009; Obi, 2010).

As also mentioned in the previous section, the cost of militant attacks on oil production facilities has been enormous. These disruptions to the nation's major economic sector impelled the Yar'Adua administration in June 2009 to adopt another response, known as the 'Amnesty Deal Initiative,' to the Niger Delta militants. The amnesty deal initiative was "an unconditional pardon [for] persons who were directly or indirectly involved in the commission of offences associated with militant activities in the Niger Delta" (Aaron, 2010b:208).

Basically, militants were given a 60 days amnesty period from 6th August to 4th of October 2009 to surrender their weapons. In return, repentant militants were to receive financial allowances, skills training and employment amongst other benefits as part of the Peace Accord. This deal programme led to several thousand men, including top militant commanders, to surrender weapons to the government (Aaron, 2010b). While the deal may have had some positive impacts on the production figures for crude oil which soared during that period from as low as one million barrels per day in 2010 to 2.4 million barrels in 2011 (Pointblanknews, 2011), critics such as Adeyemo and Olu–Adeyemi (2010) have questioned the rationalization behind the granting of this amnesty.

Specifically, Adeyemo and Olu–Adeyemi challenged the logic behind the amnesty deal since there was no truce between parties involved in the delta conflict as would be the case in warlike scenarios. They also argued that it is a militant-centered deal which is designed to only benefit militants and not the local people of the region at large. Similarly, while applauding the initiative, authors such as Gilbert (2010) have suggested that the deal only provides immediate peace but does not proffer sustainable peace nor does it address the pervasive issues of poverty, resource control, environmental degradation, oil wealth allocation or revenue deprivation in the region.

Other than the recent militarization and amnesty deal responses, the federal government has also created several intervention agencies over the years since pre-independence in an attempt to address the concerns of the Niger Delta people and to bring about development in the region. Although this is commendable, records of these initiatives have been marred with failure and disappointment for the local communities (Ikporukpo, 1998). Additionally, findings from the empirical chapters of this study evidenced that the responses by the federal government have not made significant differences especially in the lives of children in the region.

To reiterate from the previous section, the first real attempt was the mentioned Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) founded in 1961 by the Willink's commission that had been established by the British colonial government in 1958 (NDDC, 2004). The NDDB's main responsibility was to advise the federal and regional government in Eastern and Western Nigeria (later Mid- Western) on how best to develop the Niger Delta area (UNDP, 2006). After seven years of endeavour, the NDDB had failed to address the quandaries of the Niger Delta, and it faded away following the military coup in 1966 and the outbreak of civil war in 1967 (NDDC, 2004). Other problems associated with the failed board included inadequate funding and the fact that the board was created principally to provide advisory capabilities and not to implement actual development projects (Okorobia, 2010).

A further development effort was the establishment of the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA) in 1979. The NDBDA failed from inception mainly as it lacked enough funding to address the region's problems and local people were not represented - none of the appointed board members were from the Niger Delta (UNDP, 2006; Ekpebu, 2008). Subsequently, given regional feelings of frustration with the failed NDBDA, there was a rise in youth restiveness in the region. To quell this situation and promote social

development in the region, a Presidential Task Force was set up in 1989. The task force was funded with a 1.5% allocation of the federation account to help address the problems in the region. Nonetheless, it did not yield positive results and, eventually, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was set up in 1992 to replace it (Babatunde, 2010).

The OMPADEC was armed with an expanded mandate, amongst which was a responsibility to redress the ecological, environmental and developmental challenges of the region (UNDP, 2006; Omotola and Patric, 2010). To assist the board achieve its objectives, the federal government funded the OMPADEC with 3% of federal oil revenues. Disappointingly, once again the end result of OMPADEC was largely a record of failed expectations, more setbacks and abandoned projects emaciating from inefficiency, endemic corruption, financial constraints, poor planning and politicization (Omotola and Patric, 2010).

Subsequently, in 2000 the federal government established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to replace the OMPADEC. Much like OMPADEC, the NDDC was mandated to address the problems of the region by formulating policies and plans and implementing projects to tackle the needs of the Niger Delta people (Ebeku, 2004). Adopting a different organizational plan, the NDDC's governing board was composed of a member of each of nine named 'member states' as state representative (Ebeku, 2004). In a bid to counter the problems of funding associated with the defunct OMPADEC, section 14 of the NDDC Act provides that all stakeholders in the Niger Delta areas and oil companies should be financiers of the NDDC.

Although the creation of the NDDC is to take over from the defunct OMPADEC, however, as shown in Chapter Two, a partial problem to the poor socio-economic development owes much to the large number of abandoned policies or projects often discontinued when new governments or agencies emerge. The point here is that, based on narratives from participants in the communities (see Section 5.3), there are hardly any new sustainable projects embarked on by the NDDC. Perhaps, more importantly, there abound numerous discontinued and abandoned projects, such as water projects, initiated by the defunct OMPADEC but never completed or re-awarded by the NDDC.

Interestingly, to avoid some of the pitfalls faced by the defunct OMPADEC including low or inadequate funding, the federal government contributes the equivalent of 15% of the total monthly statutory allocations due to member states of the Commission from the federation account. More so, the federal government has directed the oil and gas processing companies to contribute 3% of their total budget to the Commission. Furthermore, 50% of the ecological fund allocations that is due to member states of the Commission and proceeds from other assets and miscellaneous sources by way of grants-in-aid, gifts, loans and donations that may from time to time also accrue to the Commission (NDDC Act, 1999; NDDC, 2004; UNDP, 2006).

These sources of funds were expected to give the NDDC a strong capital base to develop the region. However, like its predecessors, evidence shows that the commission has been besieged with reports of corruption, misappropriation of funds and underfunding (UNDP, 2006). According to Ajaero (2008), Ambassador Samuel Edem, a past chairman of the NDDC, was accused of corruption involving about 1 billion naira, equivalent to $8.6 million in relation to his time at the NDDC. Additionally, in 2003, the managing director of NDDC, Mr Godwin Omene was indefinitely suspended on corruption charges. Omotola (2007) also noted that the leadership of the NDDC has been changed thrice since inception on corruption charges. From the foregoing, Emmanuel *et al*. (2009) argue that the ultimate result of corruption and embezzlement of funds allocated for the development of the NDR is a continuous recycling of poverty in the region as policies and programmes to alleviate poverty are not implemented. Studies have indicated that the local people perceive the NDDC as being loyal to the Federal Government and the oil companies that provide the bulk of its budget rather than the people of the region (UNDP, 2006). This argument is also reflected in this study, as many of the local people in the study communities have developed a disparaging distrust for the development commission. In particular, with the mandate of the NDDC barely targeting children's interests (see Section 5.3.2); it is unsurprising that many children in the study communities are unaware of the activities of the NDDC. While corruption and misappropriation of funds is noted as a problem of the Commission, there are also reports that the federal government often reneges on its funding agreements to the Commission (Idemudia and Ite 2006; Ite, 2007).

Other than the creation of development agencies, the federal government has also set up a derivation formula through which revenue from oil proceeds are shared in proportion to the

contribution each region makes to the revenue collected federally. However, the issue of derivation has been controversial since well before the nation's independence. For instance, between 1946 and 1967, the derivation principle was maintained at 50%. This means that between 1946 and 1967, the Nigerian Government agreed to pay 50% of the royalties received from oil and gas exploration as development funds to the Niger Delta region in recognition of the area's special right to oil and gas resource ownership (UNDP, 2006). However, the 50% derivation formula changed in varying ways during the military and civilian administration eras. Currently, the provision in the 1999 Constitution stipulates that states where oil production takes place should contribute 13% (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Revenue Allocation for Derivation (%), 1960-Date

Period	Producing State % of Derivation	Distributable Pool Amount of Federation Account %
1960-69	50	50
1969-71	45	55
1971-75	45 minus offshore proceeds	55 plus offshore proceeds
1975-79	20 minus offshore proceeds	80 plus offshore proceeds
1979-81	-	100
1982-92	1.5	98.5
1992-99	3	97
1999-date	13	87

Source: NDHDR (2006: 37).

Despite the recent alterations in the derivation formula, critics such as Omotola (2006) question why a region given such huge allocations when compared to non-oil producing states has not been positively transformed. In 2007 alone, the nine Niger Delta States

received US$4 billion out of the total of US$11 billion allocated to the thirty states of the federation (Ibaba, 2009), yet the region is still bedeviled with poor access to basic social services. As noted in early sections of this chapter, the endemic culture of corruption has long been an impediment to socio-economic development in Nigeria. Indeed, as argued by Enweremadu (2008), rather than serving as a source of prosperity and happiness, the oil wealth appears to have sharpened the greedy appetite of the local power elite while facilitating the abandonment of public welfare at all levels. Even at local government levels, it was reported by HRW (2007: 29) that the "Tai local government budgeted nearly N100 million ($770,000) in 2005 and 2006 for the construction of its own new secretariat, more than twice its total capital expenditure on health and education".

To further address the specific problems of the region, the administration of President Yaradua in 2008, set up a forty five member 'Niger Delta Technical Committee' (NDTC) to collate, review and distil all previous reports, suggestions and recommendations on the Niger Delta, and come up with plausible recommendations on how best to resolve the Niger Delta crisis (Goodluck, 2008). The committee proposed inter alia three sets of reforms tackling issues of governance and the rule of law, socio-economic development and human development with the aim of achieving sustainable peace and progress in the region (ISSA, 2009).

Amongst its recommendations was an increase in the allocation of oil and gas revenues from the present 13% to 25%. The committee also suggested amnesty conditions as a means of disarming the militants and to help rebuild and reconstruct the region in a process involving the United Nations. To date, the recommendations of the committee have only been partially implemented, such as the declaration of an amnesty by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and a few others. In the same year that the NDTC was set up, the Ministry of the Niger Delta was also established to deal with such regional challenges as the creation of employment opportunities, the development of infrastructure, the effective implementation of a comprehensive skill-acquisition programme for the region's youth and the protection of the environment and its rehabilitation, among others (Omotola and Patric, 2010).

Critics have raised two issues to be considered here concerning the role of the Ministry in shaping the Niger Delta region. The first issue relates to the question of the Ministry's duplication of functions (Müller, 2010). In other words, how does the mandate of the

NDDC differ from the functions of the Ministry? The response from the federal government is decidedly ambiguous, stating that both agencies differ in duties. However, this has not been clearly differentiated hence there still appears to be a confusing overlap of duties and responsibilities. The second issue stems from the fact that the Ministry has a low budget allocation; as such, there are doubts that it can play a major role in salvaging the deteriorating situation of the region (Omotola, 2007). This growing situation was evidenced in 2011, when the minister reported that, from a budget of N155 billion in 2010 the ministry's budget had been reduced to N52 billion in 2011. Thus, due to a lack of funds, some projects initiated by the ministry have been abandoned or uncompleted (Shittu, 2011).

Overall, it would therefore appear that despite their intentions, these laudable developmental efforts by the federal government do not seem to have made substantial positive impacts on the development of the NDR. The overall notion as re-iterated in this thesis is that the problem of official corruption at all levels of governance in the region is strongly linked to the problem of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region.

3.5.3 Oil Companies' Responses

Apart from the long history involving the use of security arrangements with the Nigerian military forces, oil companies have also responded to community challenges by increasingly seeking to demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) (HRW, 1999; Idemudia, 2007). The concept of CSR according to the World Bank is the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, which involves working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve the quality of life, in ways that are both good for business and good for development (Ward, 2004).

Within the NDR, major oil and gas companies operating in the region such as Shell, Chevron, Exxon Mobil and Agip have demonstrated their commitment to CSR by establishing community development programmes through which they provide and support socio-economic development activities and initiatives for local communities in the areas of their operation. The wide range of development functions includes the provision of transportation, microcredit schemes for farmers, donation of farming equipment, training of farmers and scholarship awards for education at various levels, etc. For example,

between 1997 and 2003, SPDC was reported to have spent a total of US$336.8 million on community development projects and programmes in the Niger Delta (Ite, 2007). Tuodolo (2009) also indicates that Shell have employed about 12,000 persons in the NDR, especially within their host communities. However, as pointed out by children who participated in the study (see Chapter Six), the majority of these projects are unsustainable and children's interests are hardly at the heart of these projects.

Nonetheless, despite these achievements, oil companies have often been targets of several negative or anti-corporate protests in the region (Tuodolo, 2009). Report by Amnesty International (2009) argues that this targeting of oil infrastructure is partly associated with the severity of environmental damage and the underpayment of compensation for the adverse effects of their activities on the livelihoods of the local communities. According to the UNDP (2006), in spite of on-going CSR programmes, there is simultaneous on-going environmental degradation by oil spills and gas flares as a result of oil company exploration activities in the NDR. Another problem is that some oil companies' approaches towards CSR have also been counter-productive in host communities (Tuodolo, 2009).

Using the Nembe community of Bayelsa State as an example, Tuodolo asserts that while Shell's CSR programme has brought some social development to the area, the negative consequences of the approach adopted has been concurrently huge. Particularly, Tuodolo noted Shell's use of cash payments to some youths as being the root cause of community disorder in Nembe community. In his view, this approach of CSR can be partially blamed for twenty-one intra-communal conflicts and six inter-community conflicts between 2000 and 2006 in Nembe community. Other studies have also claimed that the CSR approaches adopted by oil companies have often used the development projects to divide and rule among local community members, a phenomenon which is not recent. In 1999, the HRW reported that oil companies use the award of contracts or development projects in a calculated effort to divide the communities among and within themselves and thus rule them without serious challenge to their operations.

Furthermore, Omeje (2006) asserts that the CSR development strategies of oil companies are in a sense only a front, since, in reality, the oil companies are motivated by maximizing business profits. As put by Aaron (2010c:171), the "demonstrable enthusiasm for CSR is dictated more by enlightened self-interest, in this case, securing the social license to operate [from the federal government], than by altruism". While acknowledging the

failures of the oil companies, Ite (2007) argues that the complexities of operating in Nigeria also need to be taken into consideration. By taking a countervailing stand, Ite asserts that, through CSR programmes, the oil companies are starting to demonstrate some level of commitment to sustainable development in the Niger Delta region, while the Nigerian government on the other hand has often negated its role in funding its share of the joint partnerships in certain projects such as those mapped out by the Niger Delta Development Fund (NDDC). In furtherance of this argument, Ite suggests that the efforts by the oil companies to provide development initiatives for the region are marred by the lack of response from the Nigerian government whose only interest appears to be in the levels of profits and taxes that can be drawn from the activities of the oil companies and not necessarily the wellbeing of the local people or the development of their physical environment.

In reality, apportioning blame individually to either the oil companies or the federal government underemphasizes the high-profile nature of oil exploration agreements between the federal government and the oil companies, in which corruption is embedded. To explicate this point, the HRW (1999) reported that successive governments have misspent the oil wealth, which the oil companies have helped to unlock, salting it away in foreign bank accounts rather than investing in education, health, and other social investment, and mismanaging the national economy to the point of collapse. In line with this, it is clear that both partners are to blame for the poor developmental state of the NDR.

While the above discussions have portrayed some of the general dimensions related to addressing the impacts of oil exploration activities, the next section moves on to examine some of the few existing discussions that have explored the impact of oil exploration activities on children in the Niger Delta region.

3.6   Niger Delta Region: a Brief Background on the Lives of Children

As noted in Chapter One, there is an extremely limited amount of existing literature that has explored the lives of children in the region and most of the studies that do exist often focus on 'youths', women and 'adults' but not specifically on children. One of the difficulties within the context of the Niger Delta region is that the child-youth boundary is problematic, as it is difficult to ascertain where 'childhood' stops and where 'youth' begins, thus child-related issues are often merged with youth matters. For instance, the

demographic statistics from the NDDC master plan, (focusing on the Niger Delta region) defines young people as aged from 0 to 29, representing 62% of the NDR population reports while the Nigerian National Youth Policy defines the 'youth' as all young persons within the segment of the population from 18-35 years (NYP, 2001).

Considering this, there is a significant amount of literature on the Niger Delta, where 'children' and 'young people' are often merged as 'youths' or vice versa (NDRDMP, 2006; Osaghae *et al*., 2007; Akpan, 2009; Emmanuel *et al*., 2009; Higgins, 2009). However, as noted by authors such as Ansell (2005) and Langevang and Gough (2012), using age categorization to define a person as a child or a youth is problematic since their experiences are shaped by diverse identities such as gender, education and class. Following the inadequate information on children, this section will draw its discussion from literatures where children have been mentioned while focusing on subjects such as the lives of women, the phenomenon of poverty, youth movements etc.

Traditionally, women in the Niger Delta region formed the major labour force on farms and were influential in traditional systems of local political and economic organization either as the primary breadwinner of female-headed households or of their unit within a polygamous homestead (Clark *et al*., 1999). Due to the widespread polygamy in the region, men tend to distribute their income between the female-headed units within polygamous unions, concubines and other extended family members like aged parents, brothers and sisters still in school or pursuing training (Omorondion, 2004). Consequently, it becomes the duty of women to provide sustenance for their children.

However, all this has been strongly affected by the activities of the oil MNCs as many women have lost their access to farmland and at the same time fishing creeks and ponds are constantly being polluted by oil spillage (Gabriel (2004). Therefore, women in the region who traditionally sustained their families through farming and trading now face challenges in providing sustenance for their children (Gabriel, 2004). According to Edoho (2008), loss of livelihood also undermines parent's capability to provide welfare for their children. Further to this, Edoho argues that the oil industry has failed to provide employment for the unskilled farmers and fishermen whose livelihoods have been damaged by frequent oil spills.

To address the poverty challenges that children face in the NDR, a development strategy suggested by the context of the millennium development goals (MDG) is a system of sustained education for all children (Millennium Development Goals Report, Nigeria, 2004/2005; UNICEF, 2011c). However, several studies suggest that the educational system in the region is perturbed by poor access to schools and inadequate school facilities. According to the UNDP (2006:32), "across the region, nearly all school facilities are in a state of extreme disrepair, requiring major rehabilitation. The secondary school system has been seriously afflicted by shortages of quality teachers, a regional pattern that is becoming increasingly acute due in large part to discordance between investments in infrastructure outside a well-coordinated planning process".

Interestingly, the statistical estimates of children attending schools in the region tend to be higher at 80 per cent, when compared to the national average of 54 per cent (UNDP, 2006). In 2004, the FOS also published highly impressive records of primary and secondary schools enrolment in the Niger Delta region compared to the national average statistics (see Table 3.4). At the same time, the 2004 FOS report reveals gender equal opportunities in primary, secondary and tertiary educational attainment for the Niger Delta Region, which is higher when compared to the national average statistics (see Table 3.5). Statistical reports by the UNICEF (2011c) also assert that the Niger Delta region (South East, South West and South South) fares better than other regions in the Nation on school attendance by gender and geographic dimension (see Figure 3.4).

Nonetheless, caution should be adhered while interpreting these results mainly as the UNDP report indicated that schools are often overcrowded, while attendance, participation and completion rates are low due to factors such as high costs of school fees, feeding and transportation cost. Again, the reports by the FOS have been viewed by the UNDP (2006) as lacking several central factors such as data for the proportions starting first grade and the levels of preparatory schooling were not available for measuring universal primary education.

Table 3.4: Net Enrolment Ratios in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Niger Delta

States	Net primary school enrolment ratio (2004) per cent			Net secondary enrolment ratio (2004) per cent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Abia	98.1	98.08	98.10	97.05	98.85	97.75
Akwa Ibom	99.56	93.06	96.31	99.66	98.48	99.07
Bayelsa	95.68	96.46	96.07	99.58	98.86	99.22
Cross River	93.92	92.35	93.13	95.77	100.00	97.89
Delta	93.88	96.88	95.38	99.05	98.76	98.90
Edo	97.35	96.43	96.89	99.52	100.0	99.76
Imo	98.33	98.25	98.29	99.29	98.95	99.12
Ondo	98.48	100.00	99.24	100.00	100.00	100.00
Rivers	97.47	97.92	97.69	98.55	100.00	99.28
Niger Delta	97.0	96.6	96.8	98.72	99.32	99.02
Nigeria	82.21	60.17	81.19	88.51	83.59	86.07

Source: Federal Office of Statistics (2004:86-87)[18]

Table 3.5: Ratio of Boys to Girls in Primary and Secondary Education

States	Primary education	Secondary education	Tertiary education
Abia	0.999	1.019	0.806
Akwa Ibom	0.935	0.988	0.801
Bayelsa	1.008	0.993	0.599
Cross River	0.983	1.044	0.622
Delta	1.032	0.997	0.696
Edo	0.991	1.005	0.599
Imo	0.999	0.997	0.932
Ondo	1.015	1.000	0.481
Rivers	1.005	1.015	0.738
Niger Delta	0.996	1.006	0.697
Nigeria	0.975	0.944	0.665

Source: Federal Office of Statistics (2004:86-87)[19]

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[18] Adapted from the UNDP (2006:45)
[19] Adapted from the UNDP (2006:46)

Figure 3.4: Net Primary School Attendance by Gender and Geographic Dimension

	North Central	North East	North West	South East	South South	South West		Urban	Rural
■Male	81.8	31.6	51.5	91.7	92.8	93.4		79.7	58.6
■Female	80.4	30.4	41.8	91.1	92.2	92.2		77.5	53.7
■Both Sexes	81.2	31	46.7	91.4	92.5	92.9		78.6	56.2

Niger Delta Regions

■Male   ■Female   ■Both Sexes
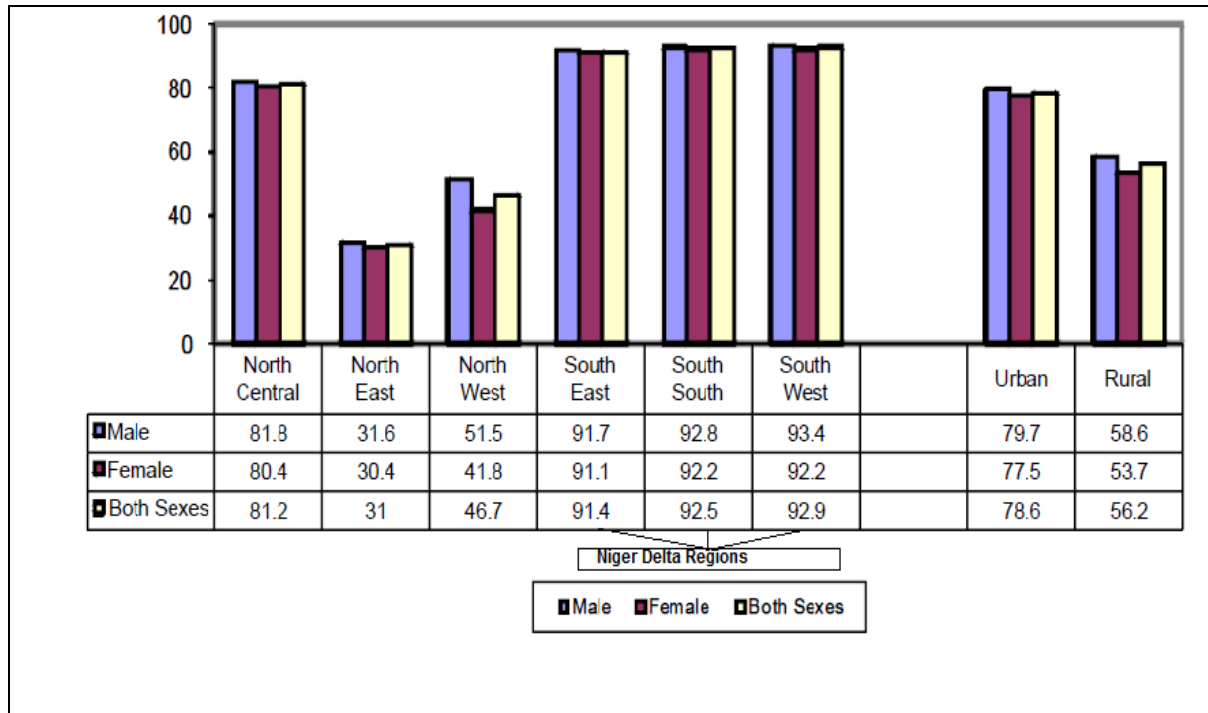
Source: Adapter from UNICEF (2011c:103)

Still on education, authors such as Olusegun and Olufunmilayo (2008) assert that, apart from major cities and towns like Port Harcourt, Warri, Yenagoa, etc., the difficult terrain of the region, along creeks, and waterways, means that many villages have no primary or secondary schools. UNDP (2006) also add that due to the transportation problem within the communities, some children, especially in the rural areas, have to walk very long distances to school, which often results in high levels of school dropout.

Across the region, another problem with accessing education is that the total number of schools is highly inadequate when compared to the region's population. In 2000, the NDES reported that the Niger Delta region had only 2,169 primary schools and 545 secondary schools. For primary schools, this implied one school per 3,700 people serving an area of 14 km2, and one school for every two settlements. For secondary schools, the ratio is one school per 14,679 people serving an area of 55 km2, and one school for every seven settlements (cited UNDP, 2006:32). Although, the report noted an increase in primary school enrolment rates, the report strongly emphasised that nearly all school facilities are in a state of extreme disrepair, requiring refurbishments and in need of quality teachers.

Drawing on prevailing factors such as; prevalence of poverty in the region, high costs of school fees, the perceived lack of employment and inadequate remuneration for school leavers, Lawal (2004) asserts that the rates of child labour in the region have also increased. Omorodion (2004) also recognise that children often hunt for seasonal jobs such as soil dredging, laying of oil pipes, and lower service jobs (night guards and security personnel) for oil companies in the region. According to Omorodion, the main reason is that oil jobs attract higher remuneration, and can be higher than workers in the public civil service, professors at the universities and physicians. However, many of the young male population upon getting a job with the oil MNCs lose interest in education and often drop out of school.

According to Clark *et al*. (1999), the adverse impacts of poverty in the region have also led 'young boys' to engage in militancy, to earn some income for sustenance. Clark *et al's* work can be linked to an article posted by IRIN News (2009) which suggests that with youth unemployment soaring in the Niger Delta, recruitment by the militias is one of the only ways for young men to get actively engaged. According to the report, a former militant, Wari George indicated that the youths in this context includes 14-year-old boys living in forests and creeks.

Clark *et al*., also mention that 'young girls' have often become sex workers to deal with the abject poverty in the region and perhaps more importantly, the children born to these sex workers are frequently abandoned by the expatriate oil workers when they exit the host communities. The UNDP (2006) agrees by noting that the practice of prostitution has increased the rate of HIV in the region. Specifically, the report evidences the Niger Delta as having the highest HIV prevalence rate in Nigeria. In urban centres such as Port-Harcourt, Warri and Benin City, reports of widespread unprotected sexual intercourse between older men and girl hawkers (Erinosho, 2004) and the migration of girls and women from Edo State, in particular, to other parts of the world for commercial sex work has been documented by Onyeononu (2003) (cited in UNDP, 2006:100).

Some studies have also touched on the health risks from oil pollution on the lives of the local people. To illuminate this, a study by Amnesty International (2009) reported that as a result of an oil spill in Ogbodo community in 2001, thousands of people lost access to their main source of drinking water and children reported skin and eye problems after diving in the oil-contaminated river. Drawing on direct observations, Clark *et al*. (1999) note that

many children in Ogoniland of Rivers State have distended bellies and light hair, which they attribute to kwashiorkor, a protein-deficiency syndrome. The study also adds that some mothers in the region have reported child deaths when they have been forced to use oil-polluted water from the rivers to feed their little babies. In Clark *et al*.'s study, (1999:11), a woman was quoted as saying, "when we give birth to these children, you find out they have lots of death rates amongst little babies in our communities. It's not crib death because we don't use cribs in our communities. We don't even know what cribs are, we cannot afford cribs. But we just have deaths here and there because the women drink from the river — the babies' food is from the river. Whatever food they use for the child is from the river. They bathe the child with the river water and you very well know that the river water is extremely polluted. And at the end of the day you have lots of skin diseases, cholera, diarrhoea, no medicine. No drugs to take care of these children and [...] before you know what's happening, the children are gone".

Although there have not been any statistical estimates of the number of child deaths resulting from oil exploration activities, several studies have indicated that there has certainly been loss of children's lives resulting from the negative impacts of oil spills and gas flares (ERA/FoEN, 1998; Clark *et al*., 1999; HRW, 1999; UNDP, 2006). An example is the October 1998 pipeline leak explosion in Jesse town (Delta State) which caused the deaths of more than 700 people, who were mostly women and children (ERA/FoEN, 1998; HRW, 1999). In 1999, the Egi community of Edo State was also reported to have lost five children who drowned during the rainy season in 'burrow pits' dug by Elf Oil Company to remove sand and gravel for road construction (Clark *et al*., 1999). In 2000, 20 persons between ages 5 and 17 were also reported dead after drinking contaminated water following an oil spill in a community in Bayelsa State (Edoho, 2008).

At the heart of the social challenges faced by children in the region, is the fact that the Niger Delta communities are poorly endowed with economic and social welfare institutional infrastructure, such as hospitals, police posts, orphanages, waste systems, etc. For instance, to complicate the health risks is the poor quality and lack of affordable healthcare facilities (Ekunwe, 1996). In 1997, a NDES report stated that health was a major problem that must be addressed in improving the quality of life in the region. These reports cited figures of 10% to 12% severely malnourished, 18% to 23% moderately so, and 30% to 40% mildly malnourished.

In 2006, a UNDP report also notes that the Niger Delta region has a general low-level record of health manpower. According to the UNDP (2006:32-33) report, in 2000, there was a ratio of only one primary healthcare facility for every 9,805 people with the average facility serving an area of 44 square kilometres in the region, while there is only one secondary healthcare facility for every 131,174 people, serving an area of 583 square kilometres. That means one PHC (Primary Healthcare) facility for approximately every 43 settlements and one SHC (Secondary Healthcare) facility to serve an average of 48 settlements, in this context many people turn to unqualified but locally available caregivers. The report adds that half the women in the delta region say they cannot afford healthcare compared to a national average of only 30%. Additionally, life expectancy also tends to be lower in the most deprived communities of the region, such as the barrier island forest zone and the mangrove swamp forest zone, where access to healthcare and potable water is poor.

Interestingly, a report by the Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire (CWIQ) survey (2004) conducted by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) suggests that access to and utilization of health services are distributed respectively as follows: South East 40.7% and 17.1%, South South 69.4% and 13.4%, North East 41.0% and 9.0%, North West 52.3% and 5.1%, South West 56.2% and 7.7% and North Central 44.3% and 7.0% (cited in WHO, 2004). Based on the CWIQ report, the Niger Delta region tends to have more access and utilization of healthcare facilities than other regions in the nation. However, the CWIQ also points that this is disaggregated according to type of settlement, more of urban settlement had access to and utilize healthcare (58.6% and 10.3% respectively) than rural settlements (47.6% and 9.3% respectively).

Despite these positive reports, in a more recent study focusing on Bayelsa State, McFubara *et al*. (2012) asserts that Bayelsa State's record of increased health staff did not translate to positive access to healthcare services for the people of the state. McFubara *et al*. (2012) argues that the increase in the amount of healthcare workers from 124 doctors in 2006 to 298 in 2011, does not appear to have brought effective access to healthcare, particularly as the state's population has increased to an estimated population of 2,022,079, giving a doctor-patient ratio of one to 7000 (the World Health Organization recommends one to 5000). Other challenges to effective access to healthcare are based on conspicuously absence of doctors, nurses, community health staff and other key health workers in the State's health sector (McFubara *et al*., 2012).

Overall, this section has tried to present some of the studies that have touched on the lives of children. What is important here is that these studies have depicted the lives of children as facing enormous challenges in accessing basic needs in the region.

3.7   Chapter Conclusion

What has been attempted in this chapter is essentially to piece together available and relevant geographic, historical and socio-economic data on Nigeria, its oil resource dilemma and the Niger Delta region. The chapter revealed that the complexity of oil revenue in the Nigerian economy and the over-reliance on the oil sector has worsened the cases of poverty and inequality in the country. This finding is tied to several authors' cynical perceptions of national legislation, corruption, bad governance, ineffectual policies exhibited by the federal government and the oil companies operating in the nation. The general consequence has been poor access to social services and adequate infrastructure, especially for poor families.

The chapter also evidenced that while oil production continues to increase in the Niger Delta region, it has been at the growing cost of environmental degradation, agricultural loss and social impoverishment with the region. Despite existing guidelines, legislation and oil exploration regulations meant to achieve sustainable development and adequate compensation in the region, the region can be described as having some of the worst forms of human shelter, deplorable transport infrastructure, unsustainable development programmes and extremely low access to safe water, sanitation, electricity, and telecommunication (NDDC, 2004). Consequently, it can be argued that oil exploration activities have characterised the region with features of poor development, poverty and conflicts, rather than a region boosted by regional growth and an abundance of social amenities.

Although the chapter took a careful look at the ecologically fragile terrain of the region, it was also discovered that the political and profit-orientated interests exhibited by the federal government and the oil companies have not always been congruent with implementing inclusive growth policies as a critical factor for the proactive coordination of development programmes in the region. No doubt, drawing from these reports, the federal government and the oil companies are the major actors culpable in the environmental and social ruin of the region.

This chapter has also sought to give an up-to-date picture on the responses by the people of the region's communities, the federal government and oil companies in addressing the problems of the region. While elements of the communities have adopted resistance strategies which have had dire consequences for the region, discussions at greater length in the chapter also revealed that most of the developmental efforts by the federal government and the oil companies have been ineffectual and probably have served more of a political purpose rather than a genuine developmental purpose. Interestingly, one salient point that emerged from discussions in the chapter is that children's voices tended to be marginalised in these responses as available secondary data clearly established that adult's interests were given priority in the local community, federal government and Oil Company responses.

With a focus on children's lives, the chapter established that since oil was discovered, the most conspicuous agent of change in the lives of children in the region is the introduction of oil exploration activity as this has had profound impacts on their lives and wellbeing. For instance, the negative impacts of oil exploration activities have affected the family structures in the region, and particularly the ambivalent roles of women to provide for their children. Drawing on the poor access to social amenities in the region, the chapter revealed that children and young people's lives have been adversely impacted upon and some have adopted some poor coping strategies such as prostitution and working in construction sites. More so, despite the adoption of the CRA by member states, there do not seem to be any appreciable positive impacts on the lives of children in the region.

Overall, by providing related information on the lives of children in the region, the chapter has sought to give a picture that not only are children in the Niger Delta affected by the nation's general poor socio-economic development and poor implementation of the CRA but by other externalities such as oil spills, gas flares and communal conflicts resulting from oil exploration activities. The discussion in this chapter has therefore set the background for achieving the objectives of this thesis, which is to present the perceptions and voices of children on the impacts of oil exploration activities as narrated by them alongside the views of adults on children's experiences. The next chapter will discuss the research methodologies adopted and the challenges faced in achieving these objectives.

4
CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have given some introductory discussion of the literatures about children/childhood, assumptions on children's rights and social studies of childhood, as well as the current discourse about oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The key themes identified from these discussions have led to the establishment of the study's research objectives and questions outlined in Chapter One. For instance, building on the theoretical perspectives reviewed in Chapter Two, it was established that while children's experiences are significantly shaped by various factors such as socio-economic developments, age, culture, religion and other elements, studies on children's voices in the global South is still an emerging field when compared to children's experiences in the western world.

With a focus on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, Chapter Three, revealed that despite the local and international concerns regarding the impacts of oil exploration activities in the region, children's experiences and voices have not been given considerable attention. Particularly, children's narratives of how oil exploration activities have impacted on their access to basic needs have been significantly ignored. These key themes have raised questions and arguments that set the ground for further research. Considering this, the major aim of this study is to present the experiences and voices of children on the impacts of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This thesis also examines adult's perceptions of children's experiences (within the study communities and at the national level) with the aim of exploring how children's narratives differ from adult presentations in matters that concern them.

Consequently, this chapter will focus on the research design and methods employed in achieving the objectives and research questions of this study. The chapter will also present the study communities where the oil companies' exploration had been or is still on going

and will explain why the particular locations have been chosen for study. With the concentration of this chapter on the research methods employed, a variety of issues ranging from the techniques and methods for data collection and the epistemological issues relating to the design of the research are explored. The rationale for selecting particular research methods and how the limitations of these methods were addressed is also set out. The actual research process is then described, including problems encountered in the field and the solutions that evolved to deal with them. As part of the challenges faced in the field, this chapter also considers the ethical issues involved in working with children and issues regarding gaining access to the children in home and school settings.

4.2   The Study Sites and Criteria for Selection

The study focused on three of the nine States in the Niger Delta region as shown in Table 4.1. In order to generate useful data with necessary spread and significance, the main criterion is that selected communities represented voices and experiences of children that dwell in communities where oil exploration activities have previously or currently taken place. In addition to this, the following criteria were considered when choosing the study communities:

(i)   Communities located in states that have some significance in the context of Nigeria's oil production history.

(ii)   Communities with strategic relevance to the major transnational oil companies. To be specific, communities that have hosted or currently hosting the flow stations of major transnational oil companies, such Shell, Agip and Chevron**.**

(iii)   Communities located in states that have promulgated the Children's Rights Acts into law.

Table 4.1: States and Communities Selected for Field Work

States	Communities	Local government areas	Oil company operations
RIVERS	Bodo community in Ogoniland	Gokana	Shell suspends operation in 1993
	B-Dere community in Ogoniland	Gokana	
	Kpean community in Ogoniland	Khana	
BAYELSA	Gbarantoru community in Gbarain clan	Yenogoa	Shell currently operates
	Ogbolomai community in Gbarain clan	Yenogoa	
	Imiringi community	Ogbia	
DELTA	Okpai-Oluchi community	Ndokwa East	Agip currently operates
	Beneku community	Ndokwa East	Agip and Shell currently operate
	Oporoza community in Gbaramatu Kingdom	Warri South West	Shell and Chevron currently operate

4.2.1   Bayelsa State: Criteria for State and Community Selection

Bayelsa State is located in the heart of the Niger River Delta on the southern coast of Nigeria with an estimated population of 2 million people (NPC, 2006). The state is significant as it is where oil was first found in commercial quantities in Nigeria in 1956. It is a major oil and gas producing area and it contributes about 40% of Nigeria's oil and gas production (Bayelsa State Union, Undated). The discovery of oil in the state has meant that

seismic lines, oil pipelines and roads, along with the influx of immigrants, have created great demands on the Delta's exceptionally fragile environment. As noted in Chapter Three, in addition to the fragile environment, a further implication of oil exploration activities is the challenge it presents to the livelihoods of people who depend on the forests, mangroves and fisheries. While Bayelsa State is richly endowed with oil and other natural resources, poverty is prevalent, partly due to the oil industry displacing traditional agricultural scenarios (Ikein, 2003). The ultimate result of this is the undue pressure and unsustainable demand and exploitation of natural resources in the area by the local community members.

The three communities selected in Bayelsa State are Gbarantoru community of the Gbarain clan, Ogbolomai community of the Gbarain clan and Imiringi community in Ogbia local government area. The interest in talking with children in these communities was due to the significance of these communities in oil production activities. Shell's operation in the lands of the Gbarain clan started as far back as 1967. Its oil fields are referred to as the biggest and largest find from any community throughout its operation in the West African sub-region (Dadiowei, 2003). Other than the crude oil found in the Gbarain clan lands, the area also plays host to SPDC's largest gas field due to its extensive deposits of gas resources. The gas manifold, which is the Gbaran/Ubie Integrated Oil and Gas Gathering Plant (IOGP), is also one of Nigeria's largest oil and gas development investments (Isine, 2008).

The significance of this is that the Gbarantoru and Ogbolomai communities have played host to Shell for over 35 years, yet, like many Niger Delta communities, poverty is pervasive and these communities are still suffering environmental damage caused by oil exploration activities. With regards to the choice of Imiringi community, this community, located in the Ogbia local government area, is one of the communities that make up the Kolo creek. The significance of this community is that, much like the aforementioned communities, Shell, began its Kolo creek oil and gas exploration in 1938, struck oil in 1956 and started its oil production in 1971. Other than Shell's Kolo creek gas flow station, the Kolo creek also hosts a gas turbine station which was commissioned in 1988 and now supports over 400 km of transmission lines as the largest independent network in Nigeria. However, despite its 150 distribution substations ancillary networks in Nigeria, Bayelsa State (the host state) is not connected to the National Grid (Dadiowei, 2003). Thus, it was the years of Shell's oil exploration within the Ogbia local government area that provoked an interest in understanding the perceptions of children in Imiringi community.

4.2.2   Rivers State: Criteria for State and Community Selection

Rivers State has an estimated population of 5 million people and occupies an area of 21,850 km2. Agriculture such as fishing and farming are the main occupation of the people. However, the capital, Port Harcourt, is famous for the size of its oil industry concentration including offices of the Shell Petroleum Development Company (Nigeria) Limited, AGIP, Texaco, Elf, and others (NigeriaExchange, 2006). Moreover, Port Harcourt hosts the first petroleum refinery in Nigeria and many petrochemical-related industries in the state such as Nigeria's gigantic Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project that is located on Bonny Island. With enormous reserves of crude oil and natural gas, Rivers State accounts for more than 40% of Nigeria's crude oil production (NigeriaExchange, 2006).

The three communities chosen from Rivers State are Bodo community, B-Dere and Kpean communities in Ogoniland. The choice of Ogoniland was in part due to the international attention that Ogonis (a minority ethnic group) have attracted. As noted in Chapter Three, the Ogonis listed their concerns about the environmental degradation brought about by Shell through MOSOP, a movement which attracted local and international attention. Oil exploration in Ogoniland started in 1957, a year after the discovery of Nigeria's first commercial petroleum deposits (Osaghae, 1995). However, reports show that the Ogonis, whose main occupation is farming and fishing have had their farmlands, forests and swamps, creeks and water-holes polluted by oil spills and blowouts, thereby leaving ecological devastation and the majority of the population impoverished (Amnesty International, 2009).

Issues of environmental damage led to public unrest, which eventually resulted in SPDC ending their operations in the area in 1993 (Watts, 1999/2001). Before ending their operation in 1993, Shell had drilled more than 100 wells, constructed flow lines, manifolds, flow stations, oil export trunk lines and flow stations in the area (UNEP, 2007). More importantly, the facilities abandoned by Shell in communities and farmlands continue to worsen the already endangered environment of the area as blowouts, oil spills and fires from the unattended oil wells, flow-lines and pipelines occur frequently (ERA, 1999). These concerns triggered the author's interest in exploring how oil exploration activities have affected the lives of children in communities where oil activities have been ended.

4.2.3 Delta State: Criteria for State and Community Selection

Delta State of Nigeria has a population of over 4 million people within 25 local government areas (NPC, 2006). Due to its wealth of oil and natural gas resources, the state supplies about 48% of Nigeria's oil and gas production, making it the leading crude oil producing state in the Niger Delta (Inoni *et al*., 2006). According to the Federal Office of Statistics as a result of the expansive oil operation activities in the state, oil spills have been their most frequently occurring negative impact (FOS, 1995). Reports have also indicated that oil spills have turned most productive agricultural lands in the state into wastelands and destroyed aquatic life and traditional fishing grounds (HRW, 1999; UNDP, 2006). The result has been not only that of exacerbating hunger and poverty in the state but also that farmers have been forced to abandon their land, to seek non-existent alternative means of livelihood (Inoni *et al*., 2006).

The three communities chosen for study in Delta State are Oporoza community of Gbaramatu Kingdom, Okpai-Oluchi community and Beneku community. Oporoza community of Gbaramatu Kingdom was chosen because the Gbaramatu Kingdom is a particularly oil rich land with Chevron-Texaco and Shell oil companies having large operations in the area. Shell has four flow stations namely: Jones Creek (the biggest in West Africa), Egwa, Odidi I and Odidi II. Chevron-Texaco on the other hand, has flow stations at Abiteye (Ikiyangbene Flow station) and Makarava (Utunana). The community has an estimated population of 5,000 people and, as noted by Bisina, (2005), there exists similar descriptions of poor basic amenities and environmental pollution resulting from oil exploration activities.

Within Ndokwa East LGA in Delta State, Okpai-Oluchi and Beneku communities were chosen because of the huge Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) operations in the communities. Ndokwa East, which is situated about 150 kilometres from the commercial town of Asaba in Delta State, was created in 1991 from the former Ndokwa local government area. In addition, the area is host to Nigeria's largest gas deposit and home to the multi-billion dollar Okpai Independent Power Project (IPP) operated by the NAOC (NAOC, 2007). The IPP project commissioned on April 1, 2005 generates 448 megawatts of electricity to the national grid; however, at the time of this study, the NAOC has not stepped down electricity for Ndokwa communities. What this means is that, despite the Ndokwa communities being located just a few kilometres from the IPP, it often remains in

perpetual darkness or is given a scarce or erratic electricity supply that is not available long enough for any meaningful business to be done with it. Much like other Niger Delta communities, ThisDay News (2010a) reported that although Agip has been operating in Ndokwa local government area for over 30 years, their presence in the community has yielded nothing positive. Not only does the area not benefit from electricity generated from the IPP project, but also years of oil exploration and gas production has polluted and degraded the environment.

From the preceding discussion, although some of the communities selected have similar characteristics when discussing oil exploration activities, there are also significant differences within these communities which are important to capturing children's experiences. For instance, communities differ in the current status of oil company operations and type of Oil Company operating in the community. Thus, it is expected that children's experiences in the Ogoniland communities of Rivers where Shell has stopped its oil operations may differ from communities in Delta and Bayelsa States where Shell and other oil companies are still active. Furthermore, even within the same state such as Delta State, it is expected that children's voices in Imiringi community (where Shell operates) may differ from Okpai-Oluchi community (where Agip operates) and/or Oporoza community where Shell and Chevron operate.

Overall, this study is about giving the children an opportunity to speak about their everyday lives in relation to oil exploration processes. It is also expected that this study will add to the awareness and significance of listening to children's voices in matters concerning them.

4.3   Methodology, Epistemology and Research Methods

Knowledge produced from research can be derived from a diversity of methodological approaches that can influence research outcomes. In line with this, various authors have argued that the researcher's philosophical thinking, choices are inherently linked with the knowledge constructed (Cloke *et al*., 1991; Dwyer and Limb, 2001; Graham, 2005). To put it differently, any explanation of the choice of a research method in human geography means understanding the philosophical basis and theoretical positions of the researcher (Fraser, 2004; Graham, 2005). Hill (1981:38) expounds on this, by arguing that "no

research takes place in a philosophical vacuum … therefore; philosophical issues permeate every research decision in geography".

While various schools of thought on epistemology exist, this thesis will focus on positivism/naturalism and anti-positivism/anti-naturalism, which are particularly related to the deliberations that took place with regard to the methodological orientation of this research. According to Graham (2005), positivist epistemologies claim that the form of knowledge in social sciences is basically the same as in natural sciences (naturalism). Like empiricism, forms of positivism explain human action as social physics, universal, quantifiable and objective (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). Supporters of this position such as Auguste Comte (1798-1857) suggest that the knowledge produced should be capable of a repetitive concurrence and should not depend on the 'subjective' interpretation of the researcher. Consequently, the positivist approach takes the view that if event A (the cause) occurs then event B (the effect) also occurs (Hacking, 1983; Livesey, 2006). Explicating this further, it then follows that the knowledge produced will be expected to be the same irrespective of the gender, nationality, age, household status and so forth of the researcher. To arrive at such expected levels of reliability, authors such as Livesey (2006) note that most positivist methodological approaches are quantitative rather than qualitative. Such quantitative methods include structured questionnaires/interviews, experiments, comparative and observational studies and non-participant observations (see Box, 4.1).

However, critics have challenged the assumptions of positivism and refute the view that social sciences should be studied like physics. Particularly from the perspective of critics such as Gregory (1981), by eliminating 'subjectivity', the belief of positivism fails to recognise human agency, emotions and people's ability to understand and construct their environment. Ashworth (2003) agrees with this by submitting that positivist approaches, for example in psychology research, reduce the individual to the status of a passive object without any experiences. Other scholars, such as Fraser and Robinson (2004:60), also suggest that while "it may be possible to objectively study an atom, which exists independent of our perception, but can that be said of 'poverty' or 'childhood'? Can 'poverty' or 'childhood' be studied the same way as molecules or atoms?" Similarly, feminist researchers such as Cope (2002) and Robinson (1998) argue that the quest for pure 'objectivity' in the construction of knowledge is impossible. Other feminist researchers, have argued from a gendered position by positing that the positivist ideal is a

male-dominated thinking situated in a masculinist science, which disregards women's experiences and perceptions among people involved in the research process (Kitchin, 2006; Pratt, 2009).

In a broad sense, opponents of positivism have often opted for a qualitative methodological approach in research (see Box 4.1). Supporters of qualitative approaches propose that knowledge is subjective and research should reflect human perceptions of everyday experiences (Tuan, 1976). This approach is concerned with understanding human environments and human experiences: how the world is viewed, experienced and constructed by social actors within a variety of conceptual frameworks. Dwyer and Limb (2001:6) point out that qualitative methodologies utilise an in-depth intensive approach, rather than a numerical approach, and aim to understand "lived experience and to reflect on and interpret the understandings and shared meanings of people's everyday social worlds and realities". In the same vein, Valentine (2001) notes that qualitative methods lay emphasis on quality, depth, richness and understanding, instead of the scientific and statistical rigour in quantitative techniques.

Amongst human geographers, recent years have witnessed a gradual shift from quantitative methods towards qualitative approaches as a way of gathering information and acquiring knowledge about the social world (Robinson, 1998; Winchester, 2005). This shift emerged as a critique of the scientific techniques associated with the quantitative revolution in which, quantitative research had typically adopted a scientific and statistically rigorous technique focused around statistical analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984). The methodologies associated with some qualitative frameworks include the semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, case studies and participant observations, including ethnographic procedures (Smith, 2000; Winchester, 2005).

Overall, however, it is important to note that adherence to a particular philosophical perspective does not necessarily dictate the use of a particular research method; rather, as noted by Graham (2005), philosophical positions are merely guides to the potential methods used in a research investigation. To exemplify this, Graham (2005) cites the work of migration geographers who have used quantitative techniques from physics, such as the gravity model, to explain (and predict) the spatial movements of people. Fraser and Robinson (2004) adds that while philosophical positions do not always determine a particular methodological position, they are useful at the preparation stages of research as a

guide to the formulation of research questions and also in the concluding stages when there are uncertainties about an approach that has been adopted.

Box 4.1: Strengths and Limitations of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

Strengths of Quantitative Methods

- Accuracy via quantitative and reliable measurements.
- Through sampling and design there tends to be greater control of the research process.
- Through the use of controlled experiments, causality statements can be produced.
- Robust analyses through statistical techniques.
- Replicable.

Limitations of Quantitative Methods
- Due to the complexities surrounding human experience, the control of all variables tends to be difficult.
- The interpretations of individuals' unique experiences and construction of meanings, as well as actions, are not adequately accounted for.
- Due to restrictions and controlling of variables, quantitative approaches can tend to produce trivial results of little consequence.
- There remain questions over issues of objectivity, because the investigator is subjectively involved in the formulation of research questions and in the interpretation of the results.

Strengths of Qualitative Methods
- The researcher gains an insider's view of the field, as a result of close involvement, thus permitting access to subtleties and complexities that are often missed.
- Qualitative methods provide the means for describing possible relationships, causes, effects and dynamic processes.
- The use of a more descriptive and narrative method of qualitative research encourages the exploration and identification of other types of knowledge that might otherwise be unavailable.

Limitations of Qualitative Methods
- There are criticisms over difficulties in utilizing conventional standards, reliability and validity resulting from the subjective nature of qualitative data and its origin within single contexts.
- The data collection, analysis and interpretation process is often time-consuming.
- The investigator's presence and involvement in the subject of the investigation often has a profound effect.
- The process of selecting findings often encounters problems relating to anonymity and confidentiality issues.

Source: Burns (2000:9-14)

Having acknowledged variations in epistemology and methods in the above discussions, and having reviewed some of the strengths and limitations of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Box 4.1), it was felt that an expressly numerical approach towards this research would not have helped to achieve the study's major aims of gaining a deeper understanding of the processes shaping the lives and experiences of children in the Niger Delta region. Thus the study has explored both qualitative and quantitative methodologies

to address different questions. For instance, given that the study aims to place children's views and experiences at the centre of its research project, it was decided to adopt mainly multi-method qualitative approaches for data collection. The techniques used in this study include: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and direct observations. Other sources of information included secondary data: newspapers, personal experiences and web-based sources. Data collection included the use of transcripts, field notes, photography, video recordings, audio recordings, personal documents and memos.

By adopting qualitative approaches, the intention throughout the research was to maintain objectivity and rigor and to complete effective, grounded, deep, social research. However, it is almost impossible to be completely neutral and objective because the process of data collection involves social interactions and dialogues. In any study, dialogues do not occur in a vacuum and the researcher's personal resources will be relied on to secure and maintain rapport and communication during interactions with participants. In the case of this research, every effort has been made to minimize any biases and to acknowledge, as far as possible, any that do exist. Although the information collected was mainly qualitative, the study also explored some quantitative methods of data analysis such as the use of SPSS Statistical software and Microsoft Excel spread sheets for data analysis where appropriate. As noted in Chapter One, using quantitative analysis in a qualitative study can help to organise data into separate components to allow the researcher to concentrate on the key qualitative findings of the study.

The next section will discuss the processes of data collection and elaborate on how the qualitative techniques adopted were employed in this study.

4.4   Primary Data Collection

While this study is predominantly focused on children as the principal actors, research was not limited solely to those actors. This research also sought the views of adult participants at both the community and national levels. Thus, research participants/respondents were grouped into three levels: children's, community and national. It is important to note although all participants in the children and community levels were drawn from the local communities studied, it was decided to classify children's responses as 'children's level' and adult participants as 'community level' to facilitate analysis.

Overall, data was collected from 194 participants/respondents for the study. Table 4.2, shows that there were 104 participants at the children's level, 84 adult participants from the community level and 5 participants drawn from the national level. Table 4.2 also presents basic participant information and the techniques adopted at each level for primary data collection.

Table 4.2: Participant Information for Primary Data Collection

Groups	Participants	Technique utilised	Gender		Number of participants	Total number
			Male	**Female**		
Children's level	Children attending schools	Focus group discussion	32	32	64	104
	Children not attending schools	In-depth interviews	21	19	40	
Community level	Parents/Carers	Focus group discussion	31	29	60	85
	Community leaders representatives	In-depth interviews	13	1	14	
	School representatives	In-depth interviews	10	1	11	
National level	Shell oil company representative	In-depth interviews		1	5	5
	Chevron oil company representative		1			
	NDDC representative			1		
	NGO		1			
	UNICEF (Port-Harcourt) representative			1		
Total			**110**	**84**	**194**	

From Table 4.2, the main techniques used with participants were the focus group discussion (FGDs) and in-depth interview approaches. The reasons for the choice of methods are discussed in later sections of this chapter. While the FGDs ran for about 1-1.5 hours, the interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. All FGDs and interview sessions were tape-recorded and the tapes were transcribed.

The next section discusses the research methods employed and presents descriptive statistics about the participants at each level.

4.5   Children's Level

To reiterate from Chapter One, the study was focused on the views of children between the ages of 10 and 17. Thus, this section explores the suitability of the methods used to collect data from participants and provides a descriptive analysis of the children's ages, gender, educational status and other factors relevant to the study. In order to have a fair representation of children's voices across the selected communities, children attending schools (CASs) and children not attending schools (CNASs) were both included within the research. This was thought to be the most practical way to capture the variety of voices and experiences of children in the communities. Consequently, as shown in Table 4.2, of the 104 children who participated in this study, 64 were attending school and involved in the various FGD techniques, while 40 children not attending schools were involved in in-depth interviews.

Considering that "children are themselves the best source of information about matters that concern them" (Kellett and Ding, 2004:165), the perceptions of the children about the impacts of oil exploration activities were explored along some broad explanatory themes regarding their overall wellbeing. Based on the second objective of the research, children were also asked to explain their coping strategies in circumstances where access to these facilities was deficient. In relation to the third objective of the study, children's perceptions about the distribution of oil wealth and oil benefits through the availability of, and access to, social infrastructures and facilities were also examined. Drawing on children's accounts of their experiences, participants also provided some suggestions of measures that might enhance their well-being in the communities.

4.5.1 Children Attending Schools (CASs): Methods Used and Descriptive Statistics

To elicit information from the CASs, the FGD technique was employed. This provided an interactive and flexible process for children within a selected set of groups to explore different points of view based on a list of key themes drawn up by the researcher/facilitator (Kumar, 1987). This technique involves grouping together a relatively small number of participants with the aim of gathering information about issues and concerns on a particular topic, often guided by a set of semi-structured or focused questions (Cameron, 2005). In this study, the semi-structured question approach was utilised because it allows the investigator to take responsibility for the topics and issues to be discussed during the group discussions (Diamond, 1999). However, depending on the style of discussion, answers from the participants often prompted additional questions and discussions outside the themes anticipated in the FGD guide drawn up before the discussion.

Amongst the CASs, the 64 children who participated were organised in 8 focus groups labelled as Group A to Group H. To explain this further, in each school visited the researcher selected a group of participants in similar classes for the study. Each of these groups comprised 8 participants between the ages of 10-17 drawn from across the primary and secondary levels, where the general age is 6-18. Consequently, there were 4 boys and 4 girls within the 8 groups and a snow ball approach was utilised to encourage participants invite their friends in similar classes as a means to facilitate children's participation in group discussion.

Table 4.3 presents the make-up of each group where 'JSS' stands for Junior Secondary Schools and 'SSS' represents Senior Secondary Schools. Some schools, however, combined both types of secondary school pupils within the same school premises. These are described as 'Both JSS and SSS' in the Table and children were also selected from primary schools and labelled as 'Primary'.

Table 4.3: Cross-Tabulation of Groups, School type and Gender for CASs

Group	School Type	Gender		Total
		Boy	**Girl**	
Group A	Both JSS & SSS	4	4	8
Group B	Both JSS & SSS	4	4	8
Group C	JSS	4	4	8
Group D	Primary	4	4	8
Group E	Primary	4	4	8
Group F	Both JSS & SSS	4	4	8
Group G	Both JSS & SSS	4	4	8
Group H	Both JSS & SSS	4	4	8
Total	Primary	8	8	16
	JSS	4	4	8
	Both JSS & SSS	20	20	40
	Total	**32**	**32**	**64**

Within the 8 groups, a conscious effort was made to have a gendered balance as shown in Table 4.3. Ethical practice in FGDs, often requires the focus group to consist of interacting individuals with some common interest or homogeneous characteristic such as age, gender, religion, etc. (Kumar, 1987; Cameron, 2005). In this study, ensuring the comfort and confidence of the children in the groups was given priority. On that backdrop, while children's specific formal educational classes were selected as criteria for FGDs, a mixed

gender approach focus group was adapted for high productivity of qualitative information. The mixed gender approach was chosen because the school environment where children were selected was designed to include mixed gender and children had often interacted comfortably with each other in several school programmes. More so, children of both sexes often engage in wide range of both economic and non-economic activities in their communities such as fishing, farming and swimming. Again, the dynamic group of mixed gender will facilitate conflicting groups of viewpoints, different interest and attitudes to the subject matter of oil exploration activities. However, the mixed gender group meant that the researcher will ensure that topics of discussions are appropriate for each participant and approached sensitively.

In Table 4.4, the children's ages and their corresponding school types are presented. Within the Nigerian educational structure, the general school age for JSS pupils is between 11 and 14 years, however, as revealed in the table below, some children aged 11 and 12 were found in primary schools. In total, there were 8 children from primary schools who were aged 10, while there were 9 children aged 17 from both JSS and SSS and as shown in the table, the research was able to access the perceptions and opinions of children across all the age groups targeted in the study.

Table 4.4: Cross-Tabulation of Children's Ages and School Type for CASs

Children's Ages	School Type and Number of Participants			Total
	Primary:No of children	JSS: No of children	Both JSS & SSS: No of children	
10	**8**	**0**	**0**	**8**
11	2	1	2	5
12	6	4	4	14
13	0	2	6	8
14	0	1	8	9
15	0	0	4	4
16	0	0	7	7
17	**0**	**0**	**9**	**9**

Let me add that the researcher had attempted to engage participants of different school categories (primary and secondary) from the nine communities. However, as shown in Table 4.5, school selection was not balanced across the study communities for a variety of reasons.

Table 4.5: Cross-tabulation of States, Communities and School Types

State	Community	School Type
Rivers	Bodo	Primary
		Both JSS & SSS
Rivers	B-Dere	Primary
		Both JSS & SSS
Rivers	Kpean	JSS only
Delta	Oporoza	Both JSS & SSS
Bayelsa	Okoloibiri	Both JSS & SSS
Bayelsa	Tombia	Both JSS & SSS
Total		Primary
		JSS only
		Both JSS & SSS

This can be explained from the fact that access to all school types was dependent on gaining permission from community leaders and school representatives within the various communities. For instance, it was only possible to gain access to primary schools within Bodo and B-Dere communities in Ogoniland of Rivers State. A closer look at Table 4.5 also reveals that some schools were located outside the communities selected for the research, such as schools in Tombia and Okoloibiri communities. To explain this, it was discovered that while some communities have schools situated within their community,

other communities have a centrally-built school which is designed to serve several communities within the same local government area. For example, within Bayelsa State, the majority of children in Gbarantoru community attended Ekpetiama comprehensive high school in Tombia community. Consequently, to elicit information from children in Gbarantoru community, it was important to visit the school in Tombia community.

4.5.2   Children Not Attending Schools (CNASs): Descriptive Statistics

The in-depth individual interview method was adopted to elicit information from children not attending school. According to Boyce and Neale (2006:3), in-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a 'person's thoughts and behaviours or want to explore new issues in depth'. This method proved beneficial because the CNASs were generally not found to be as comfortable talking openly amongst other children. In addition, while it was fairly easy to visit schools and get access to the CASs, the same cannot be said for the CNASs particularly as they were not easy to find in a clustered environment. Consequently, with this technique, children were interviewed in a communal context where they were found, ranging from markets, home, farms and even at streams. In line with Robinson's (1998) view, during these interviews, semi-structured questions were used to encourage spontaneous and open-ended responses, which constitute a major part of investigations by geographers. In a bid to address other difficulties with finding children not attending schools, the snowballing process was also employed to encourage children to suggest other potential participants such as their friends who in turn suggested other friends or siblings within the specific criteria.

Of the 40 children that made up the CNASs, 21 participants were boys and 19 girls aged from 10 to 17, as shown in Table 4.6. For instance, in Okpai-Oluchi community of Delta State, there were 5 participants; 3 participants (girls) were 15 year olds, 1 participant (boy) was 13 years old and another boy was 16 years old.

Table 4.6: Cross-tabulation of Communities, Age and Gender for CNASs

State	Community	Child Age		Child's gender		Total
				Boy	Girl	
Rivers	Bodo	14		1	2	3
		15		1	0	1
		16		1	0	1
			Total	3	2	5
	B-Dere	12		1	0	1
		15		1	0	1
		16		1	1	2
		17		0	1	1
			Total	3	2	5
	Kpean	10		1	1	2
		11		1	0	1
		15		1	0	1
		17		0	1	1
			Total	3	2	5
Bayelsa	Gbarantoru	11		1	0	1
		12		1	0	1
		14		0	1	1
		16		1	0	1
		17		0	1	1
			Total	3	2	5
	Ogbolomai	13		1	2	3
		16		1	1	2
			Total	2	3	5
Delta	**Okpai Oluchi**	**13**		**1**	**0**	**1**
		15		**0**	**3**	**3**
		16		**1**	**0**	**1**
			Total	**2**	**3**	**5**
	Beneku	11		0	1	1
		12		0	1	1
		13		1	0	1
		15		1	0	1
		16		0	1	1
			Total	2	3	5
	Oporoza	10		0	1	1
		11		1	0	1
		12		1	0	1
		14		0	1	1
		17		1	0	1
			Total	3	2	5
	Total	10		1	2	3
		11		3	1	4
		12		3	1	4
		13		3	2	5
		14		1	4	5
		15		4	3	7
		16		5	3	8
		17		1	3	4
		Total		21	19	40

Table 4.6 also shows that the CNASs were selected from eight communities rather than the nine study communities. The reason for this was that permission was not given to interview children not attending schools in Imiringi community of Bayelsa State. Despite several attempts, the community leader declined the request on the grounds that children are not capable of articulating views on the impacts of oil exploration activities on their lives.

4.6   Community Level

The main purpose of including adult respondents from the same communities as the children was to examine their perceptions of the impacts of oil exploration activities on the children in their communities. The aim was to capture how the impacts of oil exploration activities on children are perceived by adults in the communities. Returning to the themes explored in Chapter Two, geographers have often argued that it is essential to understand adult's construction of children and the way they translate their understanding into action (Holloway and Valentine, 2000a; Holt and Holloway, 2006). As noted by James and Prout (1990), it is also imperative to understand that children's lived experiences, attitudes and opportunities are socially and spatially influenced by the actions of adults in different environments. Considering the relationship between children and adult's actions, various stakeholders were selected at community level including parents/carers, community leaders and school representatives. With children as the main focus of this study, participant discussions at this level were focused on children's wellbeing and access to selected basic rights. As stated in section 4.4, of the 85 participants at this level, 60 represented the perceptions of parents/carers; 14 were made up of community leaders and 11 were school representatives.

The next section will discuss the nature of these various groups and the research methods used to elicit information from them.

4.6.1   Parents/carers Participants

To elicit information from parents/carers, the focus group discussion (FGD) technique was employed. Similar to the arguments presented regarding the technique's advantages in section 4.5.1, this approach was found suitable due to its ability to produce data based on the synergy of the group with similar characteristics interacting on a clearly defined topic (Rabiee, 2004). Accordingly, a cautious effort was made to ensure that participants shared

similar characteristics. For instance, given that children are the main topic under investigation, the focus groups were composed of people with children below the age of 18.

The focus groups were composed of small number of participants (6) to ensure that while stimulating participants to engage in a discussion, the scope and the progress of the discussion were not too difficult to control. To keep the session on track, while allowing respondents to talk freely and spontaneously, a discussion guide that listed the main topics to be covered in the groups was used. Consequently, the data from these group discussions were influenced by the structure of the discussion guide. Although each community discussion was unique, overall, there was a shared feeling that a child's wellbeing and upkeep is the responsibility of parents/carers. As shown in the data analysis chapters, the FGD sessions with parents/carers provided additional and potentially useful data on the experiences of children.

4.6.1.1 Parents/Carers: Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.7 below shows that there were 60 participants including 31 males and 29 females who were involved in 10 different group discussions across the 9 study communities. For easy analysis, the FGDs are labelled as Group A to Group J. During the field study design, it was anticipated that 9 FGDs would be held, one in each of the communities; however, as revealed in the Table 4.7, two FGDs were held in Bodo community because the men insisted on having single sex groups, thereby necessitating a separate single sex-group for women within that community. The male participants explained that the hut where the researcher approached them is traditionally designed for men, thus while women could enter the hut freely, they cannot be seated in a group discussion with other men.

Nonetheless, participants in all but Bodo community welcomed the idea of having a gendered balance FGD when the idea was sought by the researcher[20]. One strong reason for a favourable acceptance of a gendered balance FGD in the majority of the communities was that participants felt discussions centred on the lives and experiences of their children will also avail them an opportunity to talk about their personal challenges posed by oil exploration activities. Although, the focus groups were designed to have six participants in

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[20] While participants were given the options of having either a gendered or mix gender FGD, it was thought that a gender balanced FGD will enhance a wider range of relevant qualitative information on children's lives by parents/carers.

each community, Table 4.7 this was not achieved in all cases, as there were more men than women in the FGD held in Okpai-Oluchi community of Delta State.

Table 4.7: Cross-tabulation of Focus Groups, Gender and Community Names

Community Name	State	Groups	Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Bodo	Rivers	Group E	0	6	6
		Group F	6	0	6
B-Dere	Rivers	Group D	3	3	6
Kpean	Rivers	Group G	3	3	6
Gbarantoru	Bayelsa	Group H	3	3	6
Ogbolomai	Bayelsa	Group J	3	3	6
Imiringi	Bayelsa	Group I	3	3	6
Okpai Oluchi	**Delta**	**Group B**	**4**	**2**	**6**
Beneku	Delta	Group A	3	3	6
Oporoza	Delta	Group C	3	3	6
Total		Focus Groups	31	29	60

4.6.2 Community Leaders

The views of community leaders were sought because they are key informants about the general feeling of the local people within a particular community. Simply put, they are significant because they can represent people's common interest, purpose or practice in their communities. While they can also act as a point of liaison between the community

and local and national authorities, they are not necessarily elected to their positions, and usually have no legal powers. Community leaders cover all segments of society including opinion leaders, church leaders, traditional authorities, community leaders, youths, women's groups, academics, civil society representatives, etc.

To gather effective information from community leaders, participants were carefully selected from a wide range of positions in the community. Thus, of the 14 community leaders shown in Table 4.8, five participants represented community chiefs, another five participants were CDC leaders, three participants represented youth leaders while one participant represents women leader.

With regard to the choice of research technique employed, due to their sensitive individual positions in the community, it was felt that participants may not have been willing to discuss their opinions in a group setting. The literature, for example, points to several accounts indicating the controversy surrounding community leader roles and particularly their relationships with oil companies. For example, the case of Ken Saro Wiwa, who was a community leader, was also known to have generated local and international disputes (Omotola, 2009). In addition, during the course of this study, some locals suggested that some of their community leaders had lost the trust of local people by taking sides with oil companies leading on occasion to community crises. Based on these observations, it was decided that the in-depth interview technique would be the most appropriate for eliciting information from these leaders. As noted by Greeff (2002), in-depth interviews are suitable for researchers interested in establishing empowering research relations where the issue being researched is personal, sensitive and controversial.

4.6.2.1 Descriptive Statistics of Community Leaders

Although a gender balance within the community leaders' participants had originally been sought, however, as mentioned above and as shown in Table 4.8 below, there was only one female community leader representative in the study. An initial visit to the communities revealed the degree to which women are excluded from participating in decision-making processes within the region. In the view of Hassan and Silong (2008), despite the contribution of women leaders to the development of communities, women have not been active in local politics due to economic, cultural and social barriers in community leadership styles. Section 4.9.2 elaborates further on the structure of community

governance in the study communities and the difficulties posed by these structures during the research. Table 4.8 also reveals that, in some communities where access was granted, interviews were conducted with more than one community leader. For example, in Oporoza community of Delta State, interviews were conducted with a youth leader and a CDC leader. Consequently, interviews were conducted with one female and thirteen male community leaders.

Table 4.8: Cross-tabulation of Community Leaders and Gender

State	Community	Community Leader	Gender		Total
			Male	**Female**	
Rivers	Bodo	Chief	2	0	2
Rivers	Kpean	Chief	1	0	1
Rivers	B-Dere	Chief	1	0	1
Okpai-Oluchi	Delta	Youth leader	1	0	1
		Women's leader	0	1	1
		CDC leader	1	0	1
		Total	2	1	3
Beneku	Delta	CDC leader	2	0	2
Oporoza	Delta	Youth leader	1	0	1
		CDC leader	1	0	1
		Total	**2**	**0**	**2**
Ogbolomai	Bayelsa	CDC leader	1	0	1
			1	0	1
Gbarantoru	Bayelsa	Chief	1	0	1
Imiringi	Bayelsa	Youth leader	1	0	1
			1	0	1
Total			13	1	14

In Table 4.9 below, the age distribution of community leaders, which ranged between 31 and 65, is presented. The span of participants in the age structure also suggested that valuable information regarding years of oil exploration activities in the communities would be elicited.

Table 4.9: Cross-tabulation of Community Leaders and their Ages

Age	Community Leaders				
	Chief	Youth leader	Women's leader	CDC leader	Total
31-35	1	1	0	0	2
36-40	1	0	1	2	4
41-45	1	2	0	0	3
46-50	2	0	0	1	3
61-65	0	0	0	2	2
Total	5	3	1	5	14

4.6.3   School Representatives

As part and parcel of the community, school representatives within oil producing communities are known to be good sources of information on children's perceived challenges, especially within the school environment. Throughout the study, one recurring theme was the pivotal role of education as a tool to improve national development and the rights of the child. Thus, the role of school representatives was considered important in gathering information on the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's access to education.

In this study, school representatives depict representatives of the school board such as teachers and other staff, who are very often the first contact with children in school environments. Like in the case of community leaders, the in-depth interview technique was

used to elicit information from school representatives. Overall, 11 school representatives were interviewed. The majority of the respondents were teachers (5), followed by principals (4) and vice-principals (2). In other to have a fair representation of views, 2 representatives were selected from primary schools, 6 representatives from JSSs & SSSs, 2 representatives from SSSs and 1 representative from JSSs.

4.6.3.1 School Representatives: Descriptive Statistics

The majority of the interviews with school representatives took place on school premises in order to gain direct observational assessment of school buildings and classrooms (which are used in the later parts of this study). However some participants such as interviewee number 6, 7 and 11 gave permission to interview them in their homes where the schools are not accessible to the researcher. In Table 4.10 below, a cross-tabulation of communities, school representatives and the gender of respondents are shown. During the study design, a gender balance was anticipated while interviewing school representatives; however, there were difficulties finding female school representatives. The information from the table reveals that all but one of the interviewees was male, which meant that this data analysis draws mainly from male representative perspectives.

Table 4.10: Cross-tabulation of Interviewees, School Type, Community Name and Gender

Interviewees	School type	Community	Gender Male	Female	Total
1	Primary	B-Dere	1		
2	Both JSS & SSS	B-Dere	1		2
3	Primary	Bodo	1		
4	Both JSS & SSS	Bodo	1		2
5	JSS	Kpean	1		1
6	SSS	Utagba-Ogbe	1		1
7	SSS	Okpai Oluchi	1		1
8	Both JSS & SSS	Oporoza	1		1
9	Both JSS & SSS	Okoloibiri	1		1
10	Both JSS & SSS	Tombia		1	1
11	Both JSS & SSS	Imiringi	1		1
Total			**10**	**1**	**11**

4.7   National Level

Participants at the national level were sought because of their responsibility for designing and/or implementing policies related to the issues explored in the study. However, there were some difficulties in accessing this group of respondents due to their high-level, sensitive positions and the bureaucratic obstacles put in the way of those seeking to access

such individuals. Several visits were made to the oil companies, ministries, local government offices, NGOs and state agencies such as the NDDC to secure appointments, however, in some cases, appointments were either cancelled or postponed. With regards to Oil companies, representatives of Shell Oil Company and Chevron Oil Company honoured the appointments made to the researcher and as shown in the analysis chapters, information elicited proved valuable to the study. Unfortunately, several attempts to speak with any Agip Oil Company representative were futile. This was despite the assurance from the Agip receptionist (at the Lagos Head office) that an appointment will be fixed in due course. Unfortunately, this never materialised and even suggestion by the researcher to answer emailed questions was ignored.

Within the government sector, getting access to a federal, state, local government or ministry representative proved to be one of the most difficult groups to reach in spite of several attempts made to their offices. In particular, the researcher was not able to speak to with any representative from the government sector, irrespective of several appointments made. The singular most popular main reason for cancellation or postponing appointments with the researcher was that the official (government personnel) was out of town or held up in a meeting.

Nevertheless, a total of 5 national level representatives participated in this study and the in-depth interview technique was once again adopted as the most appropriate vehicle for eliciting information from these respondents due to their complex positions. The participants who were eventually contacted are representatives of:

1) Shell Oil Company
2) Chevron Oil Company
3) Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)
4) Niger Delta Academic Foundation (NDAF), a non-governmental organisation
5) UNICEF: Child Welfare Department of the State Ministry of Women Affairs (Rivers State).

4.8   Data Processing and Analysis

Data collected were transcribed when collected in the field and audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. Data from the study were also primarily analysed using a thematic analysis

approach. Specifically, this study utilised Attride-Stirling's (2001) six important steps in the process of thematic analysis (as shown in Box 4.2).

Box 4.2: Steps in Analysis Employing Thematic Networks

ANALYSIS STAGE A: REDUCTION OR BREAKDOWN OF TEXT

Step 1: Code Material

(a) Devise a coding framework

(b) Dissect text into text segments using the coding framework

Step 2: Identify Themes

(a) Abstract themes from coded text segments

(b) Refine themes

Step 3: Construct Thematic Networks

(a) Arrange themes

(b) Select Basic Themes

(c) Rearrange into Organizing Themes

(d) Deduce Global Theme(s)

(e) Illustrate as thematic network(s)

(f) Verify and refine the network(s)

ANALYSIS STAGE B: EXPLORATION OF TEXT

Step 4: Describe and Explore Thematic Networks

(a) Describe the network

(b) Explore the network

Step 5: Summarize Thematic Networks

ANALYSIS STAGE C: INTEGRATION OF EXPLORATION

Step 6: Interpret Patterns

Source: Attride-Stirling (2001)

Following this, the first step was to devise a coding framework to allow texts to be separated and dissected into segments. Respondents were then tagged with codes that indicated the community types, educational status, age, gender and status in the communities. The coding process also involves line-by-line exploration, the assigning of short descriptive labels, indexing, lifting quotes from their original context and re-arranging them under appropriate contents.

The next step was to extract themes from the coded segments. This step involved trying to identify themes, repeated themes, illuminate major issues, identify patterns and relationships in the data generated from interviews and focus group discussions. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:82), a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. The themes are further refined by identifying underlying patterns and structures in order to reduce the data into a more manageable set of significant themes that summarises the texts. According to Attride-Stirling (2001:392), the new set of themes, "has to be specific enough to pertain to one idea, but broad enough to find incarnations in various different text segments". With this in mind, information gleaned from this procedure was grouped in order to unravel new themes that were compared across transcripts. This constitutes a secondary analysis, which Fife (2005:123) refers to as "the analysis of analysis". After demographic sorting, themes were summarised, and organised into global themes while taking into consideration the basic themes and the original texts which reflect the data.

Based on the approach adopted for data analysis, the study was able to analyse its findings on the children's voices and experiences regarding the impacts of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. For instance, after obtaining codes such as 'hunger', the codes were grouped under a preliminary theme such as 'livelihoods are destroyed' as shown in Table 4.11. The preliminary themes were searched for commonalities, similar information and key differences within participant perceptions as they related to specific data across the data, which was then explored for their relevance in line with the research aims and questions in order to develop a larger analysis (Crang, 2005). For instance, Table 4.12, demonstrates that there were similarities and differences across communities while analysing preliminary themes. Participants also narrated other experiences such as health impacts and the coping strategies adopted. After analysing the commonalities and

differences perceived across communities, these preliminary themes were further refined and compared across other communities to arrive at global themes. While Table 4.11 presents a sample of how global themes emerged from codes, Table 4.12 is used to show a summary of the range of responses from the data related to the preliminary themes.

Overall, 12 global themes emerged from the data collected as shown in Figure 4.1. Due to the large amount of qualitative data, these processes were quite complex and challenging. During the writing process in the analysis chapters, literature was also used to interrogate the information gleaned from these allotted codes and themes. Words of the respondents/participants are reported in italics to illustrate key findings; quotes are taken from separate individual interviews to illustrate the contextual quality of the findings. Additionally, where appropriate, SPSS and Microsoft Excel applications were used to present numeric trends. For instance, cross-tabulations were used to compare results from different subsets of respondents, depending on age, gender and community types. The findings that emerged form the basis of the analysis chapters of this thesis.

Figure 4.1: Global Themes that Emerged from Data Analysis
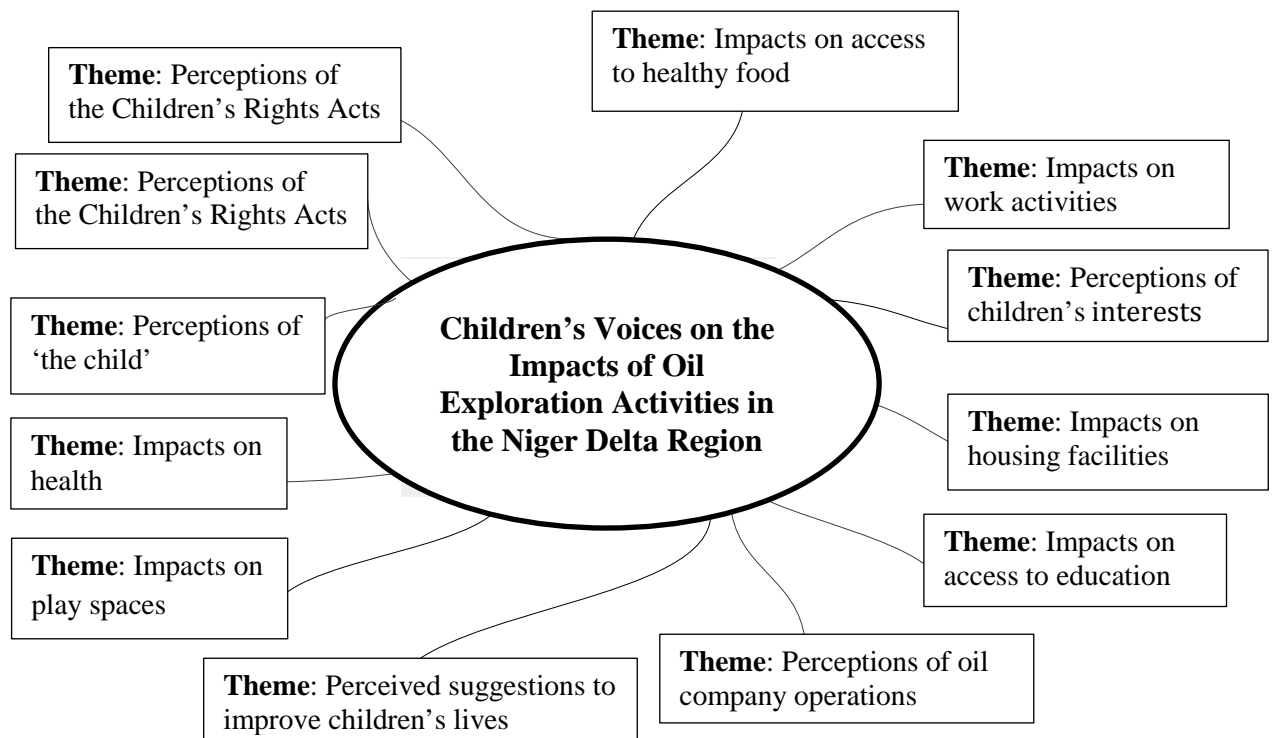
Table 4.11: Developing Codes to Global Themes (Sample)

Issues discussed	Codes	Themes identified	Global Theme
Oil spill in farms	Hunger	Livelihoods are destroyed	
Children have to take care of themselves	Inadequate food	Oil spill in Rivers	
Children get sick from eating polluted food	Polluted crops	Gas Flares on Crops	Impact on access to healthy food
Food crops are smaller when harvested	Poverty	Land property taken away from families.	

Table 4.12: Sample of Data Extracts: Data Analyses that Emerged from Preliminary Themes Identified in Table 4.11

Preliminary Theme **Oil spill in farms**	Preliminary Theme **Oil spill in rivers**	Preliminary Theme **Gas flares on crops**	Preliminary Theme **Land taken away from a family**
Low food production	Kills fish that children rely on for food	Poor nutritional food	Affects parents' ability to provide healthy food
Adulterated food crops	Poor fishing catches	Smoke from flares destroys crops	Parents are too poor to buy food
Poor compensation for oil spills	Lack of fish and lack of protein from fish		
Complete destruction of farmland	Complete destruction of family fishing pond		
Low soil fertility and poor food production			
Destroyed farms reduce income used to purchase healthy food	Loss of fishing or farming reduces income to buy food		
Coping strategies	**Coping strategies**	**Coping strategies**	**Coping strategies**
Consumption of polluted crops.	Eat polluted fish and periwinkles	Consume 'garri' excessively	Change means of livelihood
Go to relatives for food	Sell polluted food for money.		Rely on other farms
Eat irregularly	We buy smoked fish		
Sell polluted crops for money	Rely on support from family members for money		
Rely on support from family members for money			
Rely on other family farms or fishing ponds	Rely on farm crops or other fishing ponds		
Health impacts	**Health impacts**		
Consumption of polluted crops causes stomach aches	The process of catching poisoned fish and periwinkles causes the body to itch because the water is filled with an oily substance		

4.9   Limitations and Challenges of the Study

Multiple sources of evidence, including, for example, Vishnevsky and Beanlands (2004), suggest that the qualitative methodology adopted in this research study was highly appropriate for exploring the multiple experiences of children in the Niger Delta region. However, any research that has human subjects is complex and challenging, not least because it has to deal with ethical, moral, language, and socio-political issues. Consequently, some of the challenges faced in this study will be discussed under the following headings: language, structural community governance and ethical issues.

4.9.1   Language

With the linguistic diversity of the numerous ethnic groups inhabiting the Niger Delta, conducting interviews and FGDs across a multi-ethnic region was a basic problem. The Niger Delta is such that two communities located barely two kilometres apart could be speaking two entirely different languages (NDDC, 2004). While English is the official language of Nigeria, most of the participants contacted in the Niger Delta could not read or write in English. In a few cases, participants communicated through a creolised version of English, known as 'Pidgin' or 'Broken' English, which is popular in the communities (as is the case in most other parts of Nigeria). Although, as with most educated Nigerians, the researcher had no difficulty with oral or written Pidgin, there were, however, several cases where participants chose only to communicate through their local languages. In such scenarios, where I was not familiar with their local languages, field assistants who also acted as interpreters were utilised. Although the interpreters helped to overcome the communication problems and allowed the interviews and conversations to proceed, nonetheless, it proved to be a very difficult task, not least because different field assistants familiar with all nine communities had to be recruited. For instance, in Rivers State, where all three communities studied were from Ogoniland, it was discovered that even amongst the Ogonis, there were different dialects, which necessitated the employment of different research interpreters.

4.9.2   Structure of Community Governance

Another challenge faced in the research was the complex system of community governance. The system of local governance in each community is such that it was necessary to spend considerable time engaging with community leaders who were frequently suspicious about

the intentions and ultimate purpose of the study. Politically, the nine communities are structured in much the same way. At the apex of the governance pyramid is the king, surrounded by the council of chiefs who are the highest decision-making body in the community. But there were other leadership structures that were encountered during the research, for example; the Community Development Committee (CDC), the Youths' Association and the Women's Council (see CSCR /ACCR, 2008).

I had to make preliminary visits to chiefs in each community to inform them of our fieldwork objectives and to get their permission to speak to members of the community. In some communities, it was the tradition to present a local dry gin to the chief before communicating our intentions. The king, supported by other members of his council, performs the role of statesman and the daily leadership functions of the community. The king also functions as an interface between the government and the community on customary matters. However, with the advent of oil exploration activities in most communities, the interests of government and oil companies often seek to influence the workings of local chieftaincy structures. Hence, there were cases in which the youths of some communities have dethroned and desecrated traditional authority. For instance, as at the time of this study, the Igwe (king) of Okpai-Oluchi community in Delta State was forced into exile. It was also learnt that his palace had been burnt down by angry youths who accused him of acquiring large shares of Agip jobs and privileges for himself, thereby denying the community their legitimate benefits. In another example, on arriving at Kpean community in Ogoniland, I was warned not to interview a particular chief because the youths had suspected him to be a Shell contractor and a beneficiary of Shell largesse. Specifically, I was advised that by interviewing that particular chief, I would be suspected of being a member of Shell staff and risk being attacked by the youths of that community.

Besides the kings and the council of chiefs, the CDC is another important council responsible for present-day development issues. This committee liaises with oil companies, the government or specific government agencies, like the Niger Delta Development Commission, and advises the Council of Chiefs on important development-related issues. However, unlike the Council of Chiefs, CDC members (Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer and others) are elected by the entire community in a town assembly and have a definite term of office. In the course of this

study, efforts were made to speak to at least a CDC representative in each community but only four CDC representatives were interviewed.

Another notable group in the governance structure is the youth association. This association is in actual fact meant to be a loose coalition of men aged between 18 and 40 who are pivotal to the likelihood of peace or sporadic outbreaks of violence in the community, however as shown in the empirical Chapters Five, individuals below the age of 18 are also known as youths. It has often been reported that much of the anti-oil company and anti-government mobilisation takes place within the aegis of the youth association (HRW, 1999/2002). While the youth association is essentially a vehicle for mobilising youthful energies towards community development, there is sometimes a feeling of distrust between the local people and the youth council. This was evident during a group discussion with parents in Beneku community, Delta State when participants were asked how government agencies and oil companies have helped them to support their children. In response, most of the parents did not hide their frustrations by accusing the youth council of conniving with 'outside forces' (oil companies) to rob the community of their oil wealth benefits.

Yet, another prominent actor within the structures of local governance is that of the women leaders or council. As noted in Chapter Three, the role of women in the Niger Delta is such that they perform certain economic responsibilities within the family as wives, mothers, farmers and breadwinners. Women in the NDR are not only responsible for producing, harvesting and cooking food for children, but they are also expected to function as wage earners. Additionally, Ololade (2009) observes that women are the principal caregivers to children, ensuring that they feed and clothe their children. In view of the above, the role of women's leadership in community development has become increasingly important. In practice, the community women's leadership style is more participatory, collective, collaborative, cooperative, democratic, fluid, connective and supportive (Hassan and Silong, 2008). The representatives maintain close relationships and open communication with community members and activities are planned and designed around community needs. The leadership style is also frequently 'religious' providing a platform and opportunity and to discuss and share their feelings and needs. A case in point is the several hours of waiting on the day of my visit to the community for an in-depth interview with the women leader because it was said that nearly all the women in the community were in

church in co-ordination with their women's leader to pray for the betterment of their community.

4.9.3 Limited Data and Information on Study Communities

One critical challenge was the limited literature and inadequate availability of public data on the study communities in the forms of journals, books and online information. For instance, data on distance of study communities to existing social amenities such as nearest; primary school, secondary school, health post; distance to all-season road; electricity supply; water supply, sanitation facilities etc. were difficult to access from several reports. This is partly as the some of the rural communities in the Niger Delta region are predominantly small and scattered hamlets settlement type and these settlements do not often have definite and clear boundaries (UNDP, 2006). Additionally, where social amenities and service facilities such as water supply exist within the communities; they are not often subject to any measurement. Nonetheless, as noted in the analysis Chapters, the challenges posed by distance in accessing certain facilities was mentioned as a major problem in the rural communities.

4.10 Ethical Issues

Doing qualitative research presupposes in most cases the adoption of some important ethical and research-policy stances. Alderson and Morrow (2004:11) define research ethics as being concerned with respecting research participants throughout each project - partly by using agreed standards. In this study, participant's interests were significantly considered; what suited them and what their culture perceived to be ethical. For instance, in some communities, the men did not want to be grouped together with the women during the FDGs, this request was granted and the FGDs were carried out in a manner that suited each community. As noted by Hay (2003), ethical standards also include matters of privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and safety. Alderson in her pamphlet 'Listening to children' (1995) provides a comprehensive summary of topics to be considered when conducting any form of research with children: the purpose of the research, the hoped-for benefits, privacy and confidentiality, selection, inclusion and exclusion, information for children, parents etc., consent dissemination and impact on children. These standards were also adhered to when dealing with participants throughout this study. Some of the key issues that emerged in relation to ethical practices are discussed below.

4.10.1 Positionality, Power and Reflexivity

This research was conducted with the knowledge that 'power' cannot be eliminated in research relationships since it exists in all social relations. Consequently, in many cases, knowledge produced in research cannot claim to be universal because it tends to be congruent with prevailing positionalities or certain kinds of power characterised by the researcher (Rose, 1997). For example, Hill (2005:63) points out that 'children – and in particular young children – tend to be smaller and physically weaker than adults. The height, size, build and general deportment of a researcher working with young children may therefore have important consequences for the nature of the research process, the type of data collected and the responsiveness of the research participants'. However, as noted in Chapter One, critical reflexivity was adopted to address problems emancipating from positionality issues. England (1994) adds that reflexivity refers to the self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the researcher. During this study, power relations with research respondents were reflected upon and noted to be reciprocal, asymmetrical and/or potentially exploitative, as classified by Smith (1998).

For instance, during the FGD's with children attending schools, the children were enthusiastic about being part of the group discussion. Although they appeared confident and did not appear concerned about my gender or age, they, however, clearly perceived me to be in a more powerful position because of my status as a research student from a foreign university. This reflects Smith's explanation of the potentially exploitative relationship. Nonetheless, by reflexivity I sought to minimize the authority image conveyed, this was attempted by sitting on the bench with the children (hence in a position that was comfortable for them) and by increasing the mode of the children's active participation, thereby allowing them to chair the discussion process of the research. The approach of allowing the children to have greater control of the research process helped them to talk openly about their likes and resentments. I also tried to minimise the power difference while interviewing children who do not attend schools by allowing the child to choose his/her interview location and in some cases children were given the option of being interviewed with a friend of their choice to give them confidence and help them become more comfortable.

Interestingly, while interviewing the vast majority of adult participants at the community level, the positionality and power relations were altered. Largely, these sets of participants were older than the researcher and have had experiences of being interviewed by previous research students. Therefore, during the research process, although I decided which questions to ask, the power relations between the two parties was more of an asymmetrical type because the participants were in a more powerful position and felt that they were more knowledgeable that the researcher about their communities. The reciprocal relationship type of power relations was also observed within this group of participants as many expressed views that the study will be of equal benefit to them since a majority of participants felt that participating in the study was an opportunity to support 'one of their own' (since the researcher comes from one of the Niger Delta States). In another way, participants saw the studies as a medium to communicate their expectations and perceptions regarding oil explorations in their various communities.

4.10.2 Informed Consent

It is paramount for most researchers that participants must give their permission/consent either in oral or written forms (Fife, 2005) to being involved in a research process (Hay 2003; Dunn, 2005). Thus, before interviewing the children and other participants in this study, consents were sought from them and/or their parents/carers. Although, both methods (oral/written consent) were involved in informing participants, it was discovered that the use of oral consents was far more suitable when dealing with participants at the children and community levels because the request for written consent was viewed with suspicion. This was found to be as a result of the different comfort levels with literacy in the Nigerian context, coupled with the Niger Delta political situation in which people worry about signing anything that they feel might be held against them by the government. However, the situation was different with regards to respondents at the national level since they had no problems with the request for written consent.

The consent, whether written or oral, was designed to ensure that individuals who participated in the study could reasonably be considered to have a conscious understanding of the goals, methods and implications of the research project in which they were participating. Furthermore, the consent notified participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Overall, a strong attempt was made to make sure that the children

and adults who took part in the study were willing participants and were well informed about the objectives of the study.

4.10.3 Access

Social scientists such as Kellett and Ding (2004) have noted that children are rarely entirely free to decide for themselves whether or not to participate in research. This is because research gatekeepers (parents/carers, teachers, community representatives) often check the researcher's motive for wanting access to the children. During this study, researching with children in school and home settings posed very different challenges. For instance, it was much easier to get clearance from the teachers or school representatives when researching with children attending schools. Thus, before approaching the schools in each community, attempts to make contact with the school representatives to seek the support of the principal and vice principals were made. A week before the date fixed for the research to take place, a visit was made to each school to meet the staff concerned and hand over letters explaining the nature of the research and a contact number for the teachers or parents who had any queries about the study or did not wish their child to participate. However, no parent contacted me to ask questions or to withdraw their child from the study. I also ensured as far as possible that all those involved in this research were happy to do so and that they understood the nature of the research.

With regard to children not attending schools, a complex 'chain of negotiation' (Valentine, 1999:145) was experienced in order to get access to these participants. Mainly, access was requested from chiefs and community leaders to gain the support of parents/carers and negotiate access to children. In some cases, contacts with the chiefs and community leaders proved satisfactory, as these co-operations were vital to accessing parents/carers and children in the study. In other cases, I had to rely on the research assistant's competence and familiarity with local people to gain access in communities. Collecting data in community settings presented other challenges, such as taking account of what the child sees as appropriate when interviewing the child at home or at the market. As noted earlier, no access was granted to speak with the children who did not attend schools in Imirimgi community of Bayelsa State. However, on a positive note, the chief granted permission to speak to parents and other community leaders.

4.10.4 Field Research Assistants

Several authors such as Cooper *et al*., (2012) have noted that in a qualitative study, research assistants can be used for data collection, data analysis, recording and transcribing responses while conducting interviews and/or FGDs. However, in this study, the roles of research assistants employed were minimal and restricted to activities on the field. In other words, the research assistants were not involved in transcribing of raw data or data analysis processes once raw data has been elicited from participants. Perhaps more importantly, research assistants were mostly involved with participants at the community level and not at the national levels. Considering this, the roles of the research assistant involved helping to gain access to communities, translating participant responses in local languages not familiar to the researcher, taking notes and recording participant responses because in some few cases, it was not often possible for the researcher to observe and take notes of the content of the interviews or FGDs at the same time. One of the main criteria for selecting a research assistant was that the research assistant was a male. This was to allow easy access to participants at the communities, due to the perceived gender of the researcher, and the structure of community governance (see Section 4.9.2). In particular, it was noted that since the researcher was a female, it may be difficult if not impossible to approach the chiefs or traditional rulers who were mainly males, for access to carry out the study in the communities.

Drawing on the nature of this study which included 9 communities with diverse culture, attitudes and languages in different States, it was not possible to include one or two research assistants who could speak all 9 languages in each study community. Thus, a total of 9 research assistants who were each familiar with a study community were contacted from the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State for this study. The choice of university staffs as research assistants was firstly because of my familiarity and personal contacts with some members of the university. Secondly, the choice of university staffs was to provide a platform to select individuals familiar to some extent with qualitative methods as this will minimise extensive training research techniques. Thirdly, the choice of university staffs would provide security and aid in minimising the risk of travelling with untraceable persons in the volatile region of the Niger Delta. All research assistants involved were also informed of the study objectives and the ethical guidelines which they all adhered to.

4.10.5 Anonymity

All participants involved in the research project were given the option to be made anonymous in line with social research practice to avoid any potential danger if they so desired. Thus, as proposed by Dowling (2005), pseudonyms have been used for the names of all participants to ensure as far as possible that no participant of the study will ever be harmed by their participation or by the publication of the results of the study. Yet, during the field study, it was interesting that some participants did not want to be anonymised. This was not unusual as various experiences from social researchers such as Fife (2005) have shown that some groups of participants do not wish to remain anonymous as they feel that disguising the names of their groups renders the research useless to both them and to future scholars.

4.11 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of how the research techniques in the study were employed to achieve the study objectives. It has illustrated the rationale for using qualitative research techniques, such as focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews, to investigate the lives of children in the Niger Delta region. The chapter also clearly acknowledged the problems encountered in the field and the solutions that evolved to deal with them. Preceding the discussion about these approaches was an exploration of the philosophical thinking underlying the methodological approach. Finally, by demonstrating the importance of ethical considerations in the context of positionality, power and consent, this chapter reiterated the importance of the crucial processes involved in researching with children in human geography. The next chapter will focus on specific findings and discussions from the study communities.

5
CHAPTER FIVE
PERCEPTIONS OF 'THE CHILD', CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, INTERESTS AND OIL COMPANIES' ACTIVITIES

5.1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present and analyse the data gathered from interviews and focus group discussions from study communities on specific sets of issues. The first analysis is undertaken on participants' general awareness about oil company activities in their communities. The second analysis is focused on adult perceptions (community level) of child definition and their views regarding provisions/support for children's interests within the communities. The third analysis undertaken presents findings on participants' awareness of the Children's Rights Act (CRA) in the communities. The findings from each set of discussions are then grouped together to provide the critical information needed to generate a holistic understanding of children in the Niger Delta. Finally, a chapter conclusion presents a summary of the main issues discussed.

5.2   Awareness about Oil Company Operations

This section focuses on respondents' views on oil companies operations within their communities. First, the findings from children will be presented and discussed, followed by the findings from parents/carers and community leaders at the community level. Finally, comparisons of findings between the children's level, community level and secondary data in the literature will be used to synthesize the main points of the findings.

5.2.1   Children: Perceptions and Findings

Children's knowledge about oil operations came from different sources and each child's response was uniquely influenced by their particular community context, educational status and, in some cases, their ages. For instance, in Ogoniland communities of Rivers State where oil exploration activities have ceased to exist, children used on-going incidents such as community conflicts, oil spills, and fire blowouts to explain their awareness of oil exploration activities. The majority of children in these communities clearly identified

Shell as an oil company with some level of operations in their communities. During a group discussion with CASs, in Group H (JSS & SSS, B-Dere, Rivers State), children particularly focused on oil spills and fire erupting from pipelines while discussing oil company operations:

> *Joy*: 'Oil operation cause oil spill, which contaminates the environment'.
>
> *Mary*: 'When oil spills, it spoils the crops and affects the fish in the river'.
>
> *Kelvin*: 'When oil spills, it sometimes causes fire which kills people'.
>
> *Moderator*: Can you tell me how?
>
> *Kelvin*: 'Oil sometimes spill on people in the farm, it sprays on their faces, soaks their bodies and can even kill them'.

Drawing on the oil spills and fire explosion incidents in Ogoniland communities, a group of children described oil company operations by referring to oil spill clean-up activities. In this case, children described Shell as a group of '*people who wear cover cloths[21] and puts off* [sic] *fire resulting from oil spills'*. Within Ogoniland communities, findings revealed that the age of the child was a key factor in explaining Oil Company activities, as children between the ages of 14 and 17 appeared to be more informed than younger children. This is assumed in part to be due to the fact that the ages of children are significantly correlated with the years when oil exploration activities were taking place, which ended in the mid-nineties.

Results also revealed that children in other communities where oil operation activities are still active use cases of oil spills and gas flares to describe their understanding of oil company activities. 17 year old girl from Ogbolomai community (Bayelsa State) indicated that '*when oil pours in the stream, all the grass by the stream will change colour and all the fish will disappear. The gas flares cause a lot of noise and affects our eyes'*. Although findings reveal that the majority of children relied on oil spill and gas flare incidents to explain oil company operations, some children within communities in Delta and Bayelsa States explained oil company operations in relation to chemical waste and noise pollution.

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[21] Protective clothing for the primary purpose of observing hazardous incidents and monitoring activity for spill clean-up.

As put by 15-year-old girl (Okpai-Oluchi community, Delta State), *'we don't have oil spills in the farms here but we have problems of noise pollution from the gas turbine and chemical waste in our river'*.

Some children also used the poor state of community infrastructures to explain their understanding of oil company operations. For instance, children in Okpai-Oluchi community (Delta State) indicated that despite the Agip operations in their community, the community still lacks electricity. Similarly, children in Ogbolomai community (Bayelsa State) also talked about lack of clean water in the community even with the on-going Shell drilling activities in the community.

Results also show that the majority of children described oil company operations in more negative terms, however some children often used the phrase 'good things' to present positive expressions of oil company operations. For instance, some children in Beneku community of Delta explained oil company operations by noting that Agip drills oil but also provides 'good things' such as electricity supply (although it is irregular). Additionally, children in Ogbolomai community of Bayelsa State talked about oil company operations by describing Shell as the oil company that extracts oil from the community but has also done 'good things' by building a community hall and primary school for the community.

Overall, children were able to articulate their views regarding oil companies' operations and they showed a general level of understanding about these operations. However, irrespective of the community type, age and gender, the majority of the children described oil company operations in their communities in more negative terms.

5.2.2 Parents/carers: Perceptions and Findings

In Rivers State study communities, parents/carers generally supported children's assertions that although oil exploration activities stopped in 1993, oil spills and fires from blowouts still occur in their communities. They also added that, despite oil company operations, which had lasted for over 40 years, the communities' still lack infrastructures such as good schools, good hospitals, good roads, a properly constructed market and water supply. The situation was not different in Bayelsa and Delta States as participants indicated that their communities lacked proper healthcare systems, good schools and basic amenities such as water supply.

Although the majority of the participants indicated that they suffer from oil pollution such as effluent discharge and environmental degradation, they also acknowledged that there have been few benefits of oil exploration activities. Parents/carers indicated that oil companies often hand out certain benefits to community leaders. Some parents mentioned the provisions of electricity by oil companies, while some talked about building of halls and primary schools. However, this was not generally perceived as positive impacts of oil operations in the communities. There was a general feeling that oil pollution has resulted in poverty in the community and most of the problems such as oil spills could have been avoided without oil exploration activities. Specifically, participants talked about the problems associated cash benefits or gifts from oil companies which are often routed through key community rulers. The implication as lamented by the majority of the female participants is that most of mothers/female carers do not benefit from these practices. As put by a mother in Beneku community of Delta State during a FGD:

> '*In this December period [2007], Agip dropped something in the community, but only the men gets to decide who gets what. For a whole community, Agip donated one cow to over 500 people. How do you share it? The women don't get anything from this practice'. Meanwhile, the children depend on their mothers whether their fathers are around or not.*'

Across the communities, most of the mothers in the FGDs indicated that it is their role to provide sustenance for their children. Consequently, negative impacts of oil operations, such as oil spills, places more burden on them than on their husbands or partners. This finding supports Oluwaniyi's (2010) argument that women in the Niger Delta region, do not only suffer from the destruction of their livelihoods from oil exploration activities but they also suffer from not being able to sustain their families, since they are responsible for the economic survival of family members.

Overall, all participants showed understanding and awareness of oil company activities; however, the majority of the participants described their general assessment in more negative terms, especially the women.

5.2.3   Community Leaders: Perceptions and Findings

Generally, all the community leaders explained oil company activities by relating them to the negative effects of oil exploration activities on their livelihoods since the majority of

the community people eke out a living from farming and fishing. The majority of the participants narrated that oil pollution and poor impact assessment procedures often cause environmental degradation, low food production and low soil fertility. Additionally, participants indicated that as a result of the expansion in oil drilling activities, oil companies have taken farmlands away from families without proper compensation to the affected families. The community leaders in Ogoniland of Rivers State also corroborated responses from children and parents that, despite Shell officially pulling out of the communities, the pipelines remained and continued to leak, often resulting in blowouts. As stated by interviewee number 3 from Kpean community in Ogoniland:

> *'Since oil production has stopped, it has been oil spill here and there, with oil pipelines erupting at different areas. A month ago, fire from an oil spill site destroyed families' farmlands. Even though Shell is no more here, gas flares have caused us to eat unhealthy food. This is because gas has carbon monoxide, which affects our crops and renders our food production useless. The gas pollution has also caused diseases in our drinking water. People now complain of typhoid fever after drinking water.'*

The above respondent is not alone in his request for oil resource control. Responses from community leaders in other study states, such as Delta and Bayelsa, also indicated agitating for oil resource control as an option for parents/carers who need the ability to take care of their children. One other recurring issue was the high rate of unemployment in the communities. All community leaders suggested that unemployment caused by the loss of livelihoods to oil exploration processes is a major problem affecting the ability of parents and carers to provide adequately for their children.

Overall, the general feeling by community leaders towards oil operations was presented in negative perceptions.

5.2.4 Overview

In summary, the majority of the participants at the children, and community levels indicated more negative perceptions of oil exploration activities than positive views. These negative perceptions corroborate the findings of previous work on studies relating to general perceptions of oil company operations (HWR, 1999/2002; UNDP, 2006; Amnesty International, 2009). However, framed by the researcher's interest in viewing children as

competent social actors, the salient finding in this discussion is that while adults did not portray the positive actions of oil companies such as rural electricity provision and building of community halls as any sign of development, children perceived them as 'good things' by oil companies. Nonetheless, children expressed that there was a lot more that the oil companies can provide such as access to clean water.

Perhaps more importantly, the above discussion has been able to provide valuable support to the view that children are often able to articulate their experiences within their environments. Particularly, the present findings revealed children's general perception of oil company operations, which has not been demonstrated in previous studies. Children did not only display a general level of understanding about oil exploration activities but they also described how it impacts on their everyday lives.

5.3   Child Definition and Provision for Children's Interests

In this section, the ways in which children's interests are provided for and how childhood is construed at community and national levels are presented. First, the views of the children (children's level) will be presented, followed by those of community leaders (community level) and participants at the national level. A general discussion highlighting the major points will be drawn from these findings.

5.3.1   Children: Perceptions and Findings

Generally, the majority of children indicated that community leaders act as a go-between, representing community views when discussing matters related to oil exploration activities with oil companies. Thus, most problems associated with oil exploration activities are initially communicated to their parents or relatives who then contacts the community leaders. The community leader in turn notifies the oil company representatives about community reports. As expressed by 12 year old boy from Gbarantoru community, Bayelsa State '*we go to our parents if we have any complain about the oil pollution. Our parents then report to the chiefs who will then contact the oil company and advise our parents on what to do*'.

However, with regards to addressing specific issues relating to children by oil companies, the majority of the respondents believe that oil companies often focus on requests by youth leaders in order to avoid disruptions to oil operation sites. As narrated by 17-year-old boy

from Oporoza community, Delta State community, '*Shell only started providing electricity after the youth crisis in the community*'.

Children also added that when dealing with oil companies, community leaders do not really focus on children's interests such as provision of adequate school facilities or child-related health problems, since priority is often on issues such as employment and general community development matters. The majority of the children also believe that child related health problems from oil exploration processes should be given priority when discussing problems associated with oil exploration activities in the host communities. More of the discussions on health risks are illustrated in Section 6.4.

5.3.2   Community Leaders: Perceptions and Findings

The majority of the community leaders, especially the youth leaders, defined children as any individual below the age of 14, while the youths in this context are considered to be individuals between the ages of 14 and 50. The majority of the youth leaders also indicated that children below 14 years of age are considered to be young and basically under the care of their parents, while children from 14 upwards are perceived as independent individuals who can participate in youth movements.

Findings also show that there is no specific community leader in charge of representing children's needs and interests in all study communities. For instance, when asked about how children's interests are represented, a range of responses was given about which community leader is in charge within the leadership structure. These responses included the following:

1.   '*I am a mouth piece for everybody in the community including the children*' (Youth leader in Kpean community, River state).

2.   '*I am a representative of the voices of a day old child up to a 50 year old man or woman in this community*' (Youth leader in Okpai-Oluchi community, Delta State).

3.   '*I am in charge of all community issues involving everybody*' (Community chief in B-Dere community, Ogoniland, Rivers State).

4.   *I am in charge of all community development issues involving everybody*' (CDC leader in Ogbolomai community, Bayelsa State).

5.   *I represent the voices of women in this community* (Women leader in Okapi-Oluchi community, Delta State).

Drawing on the different responses above, we can suggest that children's needs are not given any special attention but are submerged into the needs of adults by community leaders. Additionally, when community leaders were asked about how children's needs are presented while discussing with oil companies, they all explained that the needs of adults are given priority mainly because children are generally perceived to be a responsibility of their parents. More so, it is believed that parents can provide children's needs if parents are given an enabling environment by the federal government and the oil companies to perform their roles.

This perception was stated as reported in the following responses:

> *'Our attention is not on children because the problems in most communities are mainly unemployment and loss of livelihoods and this diverts attention from children'*
> > Interviewee number 1 (Bodo Community, Rivers State)

> *'We believe that if the oil companies and the federal government take care of parent's requests, then the children will be taken care of too by their parents'*
> > Interviewee number 6 (Imiringi, Bayelsa State)

> *'The plights of children have not been given any attention. How can children expect attention, when even the problems of the parents have not been addressed?'*
> > Interviewee number 3, (Kpean, Rivers State)

> *'Children's interests are not a focus because the youths are more in number and the youths can protest. So the majority of responses from oil companies are directed to the youth's interest'*
> > Interviewee number 8 (Beneku community, Delta State)

The above statements by community leaders reflect that while children are visible, their voices are side lined and often merged with what parents and adults want in the communities. This finding is synonymous with the problems indicated by UNICEF (2011c) report, which argued that although the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development is designed to deal with children's rights, children's needs are secondary to

those of women in the structure of the ministry, and this approach can negatively affect children's wellbeing.

Overall, findings clearly reveal that while the community governance structure allows for youth and women leaders to partake in decision-making processes, children are not considered as having a 'voice' in community. Further, the child is defined as any individual below the age of 14 and perceived as being a responsibility of their parents/carers, while individuals from 14 upwards are perceived as youths who can partake in youth movements. Another key point is that at the community level, political movement is a key factor used in determining where childhood ends and where youth begins.

5.3.3   National level: Perceptions and Findings

At the national level, a NDDC representative indicated that the Commission does not engage in special programmes or projects (other than educational projects) that are targeted at children. According to the representative, the '*NDDC engages in educational programmes, building of primary schools, providing classroom blocks. We do not have programmes that are concentrated on children. We have programmes for university and secondary school people. We do not engage in child-related projects because we work within a mandate. We take our instructions from the presidency. The NDDC is focused on mega infrastructural projects. We have recently begun human capital programmes and youth programmes as a result of incessant crises often perpetuated by youths*'.

The representative also indicated that the NDDC is more concerned with the youths in the Niger Delta region. The youths in this case were defined as individuals from the age of 18 upwards. Among the seven departments of the Commission, it was observed that the voices of youths are represented in a 'Youth Council for the NDR' and women also have a department known as the 'Women's Council for the NDR'. However, there is no department representing children's needs. In effect, programmes such as poverty alleviation plans and skill acquisition programmes within the agency are targeted at individuals from age of 18 upwards.

Similarly, according to a Chevron Oil Company representative, there are no special units to handle matters regarding children in the Oil Company or units in charge of children's interests in host communities. The representative explained that as part of the CSR, the only programmes where children are involved are: (i) building of both primary and

secondary schools, (ii) providing free medical services to children and (iii) awarding of scholarships/bursaries. To address host community problems, Chevron Oil Company have adopted a corporate-community relationship approach, which aims to deal with community concerns based on a list from community representatives. In this structure, communities organise themselves into regional development councils, together with NGOs and government technical experts. This community-driven development approach also relies on a Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) between Chevron and neighbouring communities. Accordingly, Chevron designs development programmes to suit community need.

While this process is said to be a participatory, transparent, accountable and community-driven approach, it is evident that development programmes within host communities are community-based, and children's interests are submerged within those of adults.

5.3.4 Overview

Overall, within the national level, it is also apparent that while children are visible and recognised, their interests are not conceptualised as a separate entity within communities. Thus, the interests of children are not given any special attention. These results prove to be a critical feature of genuinely addressing the problems of children's interests within communities. In effect, the aspirations of the adults in the communities are being used to assume the needs for children. Findings also show that at the national level, children are generally perceived to be below the age of 18. However, the oil companies and the NDDC have often structured programmes around youths and adults, which in this context is situated around individual from the age of 18 upwards. By this categorisation, the interests of children are within the NDDC are loosely merged into the needs of youths', women and/adult groups. This pattern was also found to be synonymous with the strategies adopted by parents and community leaders at the community level where children's needs are expected to fit into the needs of adults. However, at the community level, children are perceived as individuals below the age of 14.

These findings corroborate the arguments from UNICEF (2011c: 7-8) that, while child-related government programmes in Nigeria tend to be ambitious, "matters on child welfare are often addressed as mere components of large more comprehensive initiatives whose implementation requires greater intellectual input than is provided in the details of such

initiatives". Consequently, to promote and monitor children's well-being both at community, local and national levels, there is need for children's interests to be recognised and separated not only within the communities but also by oil companies and development agencies.

5.4   Awareness of the 2003 Children's Rights Act (CRA)

Having established that all the Niger Delta States have promulgated the CRA into law (see Chapter Two), we now turn to explore the extent to which participants in the study communities are aware of the CRA. Findings will be presented as elicited from the following participants: children (children's level), parents/carers, school representatives (community level) and the UNICEF representative (national level), followed by a summary of discussions from these participants.

5.4.1   Children: Perceptions and Findings

To begin with, none of the children in any of the study communities had any knowledge of the CRA or its basic provisions. As put by a 15 year old in B-Dere community of Rivers State, '*children in this community have never heard of anything like Children's Rights Acts. Maybe people in the town can understand what you are asking about*'. It was also somewhat surprising that this finding did not make any difference between children attending schools and children not attending schools. Interestingly though, findings were able to demonstrate that children expected to enjoy certain rights or privileges mainly since, during discussions, children often referred to themselves 'as children from oil producing communities'. By this children talked about their expectations to benefit from access to certain basic rights such as free education.

5.4.2   Parents/carers: Perceptions and Findings

Similar to findings at the children's level, results from the FGDs showed that parents/carers are not aware of the CRA. Although they all displayed a general knowledge that parents are responsible for children's needs and that the government is obliged to provide an enabling environment for parents to execute these parental roles. They however, are not aware that of any CRA document specifying children's rights or the penalties attached to its infringements.

5.4.3 School Representatives: Perceptions and Findings

Amongst school representatives[22], findings reveal that all participants are aware of the CRA. A conceivable explanation for this might be related to their various academic fields. Nonetheless, the school representatives indicated that the CRA is similar to several government policies that have not yielded any positive results in the region. While applauding the promulgation of the CRA, the majority of the school representatives expressed the view that with the pervasive poverty in the region, the CRA is another placebo used by government rather than a solution to the problems of the region. By this they mean that rather than address problems of poverty in the region, the region is awash with non-implementation of federal government policies and initiatives.

5.4.4 UNICEF Representative

In line with the principles of the UNCRC, the UNICEF representative in Rivers State indicated that the department defines children as persons below the ages of 18. The representative also noted that although the CRA has been promulgated into law by the Rivers State government, there is still a need to create an awareness concerning the rights of the child in the State. At the forefront of the department's objectives has been problems regarding child participation, coupled with providing for orphaned children due to oil-related communal crisis and AIDS. Thus, to promote child participation, the UNICEF department has set up a children's parliament of 33 children in River's State.

When asked about the selection process for children's involvement in the parliament, the representative said children were selected from schools in Port-Harcourt to represent various LGAs in Rivers State. With regards to funding, the department receives local and international funding via the Federal Ministry and monies are disbursed through registered NGOs. Nonetheless, the representative pointed out that funding is still a major issue in the areas of education and providing healthcare services for children in the state. It was also indicated that the department is yet to get any funding support from the oil companies to enhance the lives of children in Rivers State. Overall, it was gathered from the interview that the majority of the local people, particularly in the rural communities, are unaware of the existence of the CRA.

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[22] As noted in Chapter Four, school representatives are participants selected from staff of the school board

5.4.5 Overview

In summary, despite the promulgation of the CRA into Law by all the Niger Delta States, children and the majority of adults in the study communities are oblivious of the CRA. It was surprising that in all study communities, children's educational status did not make any difference in children's responses. Drawing on the information from parents/carers, school representatives and the UNICEF representative, we can argue the CRA still requires massive sensitisation events to inform children and the general public on what constitutes the rights of children and measures taken to enhance these rights. This finding has an implication on the commitment of policy makers to create an awareness of the CRA in rural communities.

Additionally, it was interesting that children in the region perceive themselves as unique and different from children in other parts of Nigeria by referring to themselves as 'children from oil producing communities'. This was drawn from the narratives of children who talked about lack of access to basic needs despite their communities being referred to as oil producing communities.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

In general, discussions on themes such as participant's perceptions of oil company operations, provisions of children's interests, construction of the child and awareness of the CRA, have provided valuable information on children in the region. As noted from the above discussion, all children irrespective of their gender, ages or community types were able to article their views clearly on their understanding of oil company operations. Children's perceptions and narratives tend to be drawn primary from the incidents of oil pollution associated with oil exploration activities. Additionally, although children's perceptions of oil company operations were mainly described in negative terms, some positive perceptions emerged from their narratives. This finding contradicts with adult's perceptions at the community level mainly as all adults did not view oil company projects or development programmes as positive contributions. Thus, the majority of adults at oil exploration activities far out-weigh the positive contributions of the oil companies.

Interestingly, findings on the construction of the child revealed different age categorisations used to define children at both community and national levels. While children at the national level are perceived as individuals below the age of 18 by

organisations such as the NDDC and oil companies, evidence suggest that at the community level, the youth leaders and some community leaders situate the age of the child in political movements. For instance, youth leaders often define a child as any individuals below the age of 14. By this categorisation, individuals below the age of 14 are perceived as children and are not expected to partake in youth movements, while individuals from age of 14 upwards are perceived as youths who can actively play roles in youth movements. This finding on the different construction of a child adds to the problems of using 0-18 age category as child definitions, particularly in African rural societies.

With regards to children's interests, at community level, adults believe that children's interests are a responsibility of their parents, while at the national level, evidence shows that oil companies and the NDDC often target the wider community people rather than children. Specifically, adults at the community level, tends to believe that the needs of children will be provided by parents/carers, if the federal government and the oil companies address the needs of parents/carers. In addition, it is also believed that oil companies should prioritise adult's interests when discussing oil exploration activities. This finding differs from children's views mainly as the majority of children believe that child-related health risks associated with oil pollution should be a major focus of the oil companies and community leaders.

The perceptions of adults at the community level and the participants at the national level can be linked to existing studies on the Niger Delta region, that have reported findings based on adult perceptions and these studies have also given adult voices a privileged position in the society. However, findings from this chapter re-emphasises the significance of listening to children's voices in matters that concern them and shows that children's needs can differ significantly from what adults think children want when acting on their behalf.

With the overall negative perception of oil exploration activities in the communities, it becomes imperative to bring to fore (in the subsequent chapters) the questions of how oil exploration activities specifically affect children's lives.

6
CHAPTER SIX
IMPACTS OF OIL EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES ON FOOD, WATER, HEALTH AND HOUSING FACILITIES

6.1   Introduction

In this chapter, the data analysis will present participant's perceptions of the impacts of oil exploration activities on; (i) children's access to healthy food, (ii) children's access to clean water, (iii) children's health and healthcare services and (iv) children's access to housing facilities. The chapter then draws its conclusion from all the information gathered on all themes. It is important to note that in cases where certain disparities such as gender exist, they will be pointed out in discussions; however, there were no gender-disaggregated data available on study communities.

6.2   Healthy Food

Findings and discussion on children's access to healthy food will be presented beginning with the perceptions of children (children's level) followed by those of parents/carers and community leaders at the community level.

6.2.1   Children: Perceptions and Findings

All children admitted they play a major role in accessing healthy food by engaging in various activities to support their families. However, the majority of children also indicated their parents/carers and siblings are key influences on what they consume. A few children, however, pointed out that relatives also play a minor role in the provision of their food intake. For instance, during interviews with CNASs, 12-year-old Cynthia from Gbarantoru community (Bayelsa State) stated that '*although my mum provides food for the house, I also pay for the house food from the money I make selling fish*'.

Across the communities, many children strongly suggested that oil exploration activities have adversely affected their access to healthy food through the activities they engage in such as fishing, farming and trading. To illustrate this, during interviews with CNASs, 15

year old Matthew from Bodo community (Rivers State) stated that '*when oil spill destroyed our farm, it also destroyed the cassava which we rely on for food and income. The soil was so bad that were no leaves on the surface and we were told that nothing can grow in that farm again*'. Similarly during the FGDs with CASs, a significant number of participants narrated corresponding experiences. The following narrative from Group G (JSS & SSS) in Oporoza community of Delta State is used to capture some of the responses from the CASs.

God's Time: When oil spilled in our farm, it destroyed our cassava and our yams.

Gloria: 'Due to the oil spill in our farm, we did not have enough food, because the fire burned all the crops'.

Precious: 'The oil spill in our river killed the fish and periwinkles and made my fishing net black.'

Baritune: 'After oil spilled in the river, it affected the fish and I am not happy because there is no fish and we can't even catch periwinkles.'

Munbari: 'Yes it's true; we enjoy eating fish from the river because it gives protein. So without fish in my food, it makes me unhappy.'

While not all children have directly witnessed oil spill in their farms, all children were however able to narrate how oil spills have affected access to healthy food, based on reports from their parents and relatives. As stated by 10-year-old Matthew from Bodo community of Rivers State '*I have not seen oil spill in our farm, but my father said the oil destroyed our yams, pumpkin leaves, cassava and coco-yams*'. These findings support evidence from the UNDP (2006) report on the Niger Delta region that oil spills and gas flares in the NDR have affected local people's livelihoods by destroying the vegetation and farm products that the people depend on. Several studies also indicated that the Niger Delta mangrove and fresh water swamps support fishing activities and gathering of seafood such as periwinkles (tympanotonous fuscatus) oysters, water snails, shrimps and crayfish, however, when oil spillages occurs in rivers, it depletes fish and seafood stocks that the local people rely on for food (HRW, 1999; NDDC, 2004; UNDP, 2006; Amnesty International, 2009).

In some instances, children explained that the impacts of oil spills in farms and rivers/streams create sudden disruption which can cause a depletion or total collapse in the anticipated income for their parents and in turn affect their access to healthy food. In other cases, children mentioned that when oil spills in the community, food security is threatened

and there is an immediate increase in the market prices of food stocks, especially on staple foods. While interviewing the CNASs in Gbarantoru community (Bayelsa State), 17 year old girl who trades in the market, explained that people whose farms have been affected by oil spills tend to increase the prices of crops from their other farms in order to recover the losses incurred, and this process has a knock-on effect on prices of other food-stuffs in the market. Particularly, she indicated that during these periods, she and her siblings have to reduce the normal portion of healthy food bought in the market to cope with the increase in food prices.

In communities such as Okpai-Oluchi (Delta State), where children have not mentioned incidences of oil spills, they however still maintained that the on-going oil exploration activities have affected their access to healthy food. Specifically, children involved in farming activities explained that the productivity and size of the crops has decreased over time. They gave specific examples of how yam sizes are becoming very 'tiny' when harvested. Interestingly, when asked why this was the case, the children believed that when gas is burned during oil operations, the air pollutant has a direct adverse impact on farms near the flares and even on farms further away from the flames, which shrinks the size of food crops such as yams when harvested. To explain further, the children explained that they used to harvest bigger yams in previous years but the continuous oil operations have shrunk the sizes of yams harvested. This information tends to corroborate with the results from several studies on the impacts of gas flares on vegetation. A study by Daneil-Kalio and Braide (2006) noted that gas flares attracts insects such yam beetles (Heteroligus spp.) that attacks yam tubers. Other studies also show that the continuously emission of heat and light radiation, may reduce yields, destroy soil and crop production within the areas where gas is burnt from oil exploration activities (Amnesty International, 2009).

Considering children's narratives on how oil exploration negatively impact on children's access to food, many children also talked about the coping strategies that have been adopted to deal with these problems. This discussion has been grouped into eight categories:

6.2.1.1 Meal Skipping

Generally, some children reveal that poor access to food resulting from the negative impacts of oil exploration activities especially on their family livelihoods have caused

them to skip meals at certain times of the day. Meal skipping in this study is used to describe narratives where children have talked about missing one or more meal a day or not getting enough to eat. Across the study communities, children generally talked about not having enough to eat when oil affects their family farms/ponds. During these periods, some children mention that they skip meals such as breakfast or go to bed hungry as a coping strategy. As put by 10-year-old Kate (Group D Primary School, B-Dere community, Rivers State) *'there are times when we just sleep because there is no food'*.

One other key finding on meal skipping is the way in which the school environment plays an inhibiting role in accessing other forms of food. For instance, while children not attending schools can skip main meals, they sometimes get to eat 'substitutes' such as sugarcanes, fruits or drink garri, which they find in homes, farms or surroundings. In contrast, children attending schools do not get access to these food 'substitutes' in the school environment. Based on children's narratives, the school environment can confine and restrict school children that experience meal skipping from actively finding food 'substitutes' until after school closing hours. There is also the tendency that when children attending schools skip breakfast for instance, they are more than likely to skip lunch as well, since none of the schools visited provide lunch for pupils and children hardly have money to buy food from food shops during breaks.

The majority of school children who experience meal skipping also say they often get very hungry and too tired to concentrate on school activities, which also cause them to attend schools irregularly. Supporting this assertion, some school representatives commented that a major problem in child education is related to the high level of children arriving at schools hungry, which often lead to increased absenteeism and poor academic results (see Section 7.2.3.2). Some other studies focusing on the impacts of meal skipping argue that meal skipping is significantly correlated with deficiencies in intellectual performance and cognitive development, behavioural and mental problems, obesity and overweight conditions as well as eating disorders (Whitney and Rolfes, 1999). Similarly, findings from a study on meal-skipping in children by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs in 2007 also asserts that children who skip meals are more likely to have a lower school performance in children (Bae *et al*., 2008).

6.2.1.2   Change in Staple Foods

The majority of children emphasised that cassava granules and fresh fish are the main staple foods in their communities. However, the negative impacts of oil exploration activities have potentially changed their food consumption patterns forcing them to sometimes compromise diets and nutrition, which leads to poor health. To expound on this, in the FGD Group C (JSS, Kpean community Rivers State), children explained that when their families lost their livelihoods as a result of oil pollution, they began an excessive consumption of alternative foods such as sugarcane and drinking of 'garri' until their income got better.

During the interviews with the CNASs, a 14-year-old girl, from Kpean community, Rivers State alleged that her parents usually do not buy fresh fish because it is easily caught from the rivers. However, due to the negative impacts of oil operations in the rivers, they are forced to buy iced fish when they can afford it. Similarly, 12 year old Peter from Ogbolomai community (Bayelsa State) stated that, '*our parents now buy iced fish to feed us. Before now, iced fish were rarely eaten because we relied mainly on our fresh fishes from the rivers*' Several studies have indicated that the buying of 'iced fish' (frozen fish) in most of the Niger Delta communities is a recent practice which has gradually replaced the traditional course of catching fresh fish due to the negative impacts of oil exploration on the aquatic environment of the NDR. According to a study by Clark *et al*. (1999:9), "in Eket, Akwa Ibom State, where Mobil's operations have reportedly led to the loss of fish populations along the coast, fishing is available only to those who can afford large boat engines and trawlers to venture onto the high seas. The rest of the population must buy "ice fish" (frozen fish) from commercial fishermen, a practice totally unknown a few years back. Since market prices are constantly on the rise, many villagers have to go without fish". Pyagbara (2007) also noted that Ogoni that was once the food basket of the Niger Delta is now fully dependent on imported food such as the popular ice fish that has now replaced the traditional fish in our menu table.

6.2.1.3   Reliance on Alternative Activities or Change in Work Activities

Some children also explained that their families have more than one farm and this helps to provide an alternative access to food. Thus, when oil spill affects one of their farms, their parents depend on other farmlands or fishponds for food. As put by Timothy, in

Gbarantoru community (Bayelsa State), '*when our farm got polluted we were surviving by selling fish because we also go fishing*'. However, a few children who indicated that their families have just one farm or one fishing business mentioned that they have had to change the type of work activities they engage in. For instance, a 15-year-old boy from Kpean community (Rivers State) indicated that he used to support himself from the food and income he gained from fishing. However, as a result of oil spills in the river, he began working as a labourer for a construction company. Furthermore, some children involved in trading (selling food-stuffs in the market) added that the impacts of oil spill on their farms forced them to change the types of crops they sell in the market. In this instance, a 10-year-old girl in Kpean Community (Rivers State) stated that when oil spill destroyed the yams and cassava in their farm, they start buying and selling plantains to provide income for food.

6.2.1.4 Consumption of Polluted Food

The majority of the children also mentioned that when oil pollution destroys their parent's livelihoods, they end up consuming polluted farm crops or seafood such as contaminated periwinkles from the polluted river. One major drawback with this process is that, since the river has been polluted by oil spill, the children have to wear heavy layers of clothing before getting into the river in order to reduce the skin rashes and body itch caused by the oil. In addition, some children also talked about consuming foods directly from oil spilled farms or rivers. For instance, during the FGD with CASs (Group G (JSS & SSS, Oporoza community, Delta State), a girl narrated that '*after an oil spill, some fish survives while some die off, so we quickly catch the fish that are contaminated but still alive, wash them thoroughly before cooking and eating them*'. Another group of children indicated that they sometimes eat dead poisoned fishes from polluted rivers depending on how long ago the spill occurred. As narrated by 15-year-old Juliet in Okpai-Oluchi community, Delta State, '*if the fish has been dead for a day or two, then we do not eat it but if it was killed the same day then we eat it*'.

Moreover, many children also indicated that in the event of an oil spill, they often quickly dig up and consume crops perceived as not affected by the spill. These narratives emerged in Group H (JSS & SSS, B-Dere, Rivers State), where some children stated that immediately after an oil spill in their farms, their parents tell them to quickly dig up crops such as yams and cassava that they believe have not been affected by the spill. However,

children were quick to point out the problem with this practice. In particular, children mentioned that because they uproot crops that are immature and not due for harvest, in a bid to avoid the oil spill spreading to them, they could not sell the crops in the market. Consequently, with the loss of income and loss of healthy food crop, they often end up consuming these immature crops. It is important to add that children are also well aware of the health implications, particularly as they talked about the stomach-aches and other illnesses caused by the consumption of these unhealthy or polluted crops. For instance, 16-year-old Samson from Bodo community stated that '*I know it is not good to eat polluted crops because it gives severe stomach aches but we still eat them*'.

Although some children talked about relying on alternative farms for food as noted earlier, it was surprising to find that they sometimes still eat oil-polluted crops from their affected farms/ponds. Within this coping strategy, children explained the crops from the unaffected farms are sold in the markets for income, while their parents advise them to eat the oil spilled polluted crops from the polluted farm. As narrated by Peace, a 16 year old girl, during an interview with CNAS in Ogbolomai community of Bayelsa State, '*nobody will buy the bad crops if we take them to the market. So we eat the bad crops and sell the good crops for money*'. Overall, children indicated that the practice of eating polluted food is purely as a means of survival and they often have limited alternatives to access healthy food.

6.2.1.5   Trading Polluted Crops

While earlier discussions indicated that some children do not sell immature or oil polluted crops, there were children who talked about the practice of selling polluted crops in the market. For instance, Rita, a 17 year old from B-Dere community (Rivers State), indicated that after the event of oil spill in their family farm, she still sells some of the crops from the polluted farm in the market. She also explained that fruits such as oranges from polluted farms are thoroughly washed with 'Omo' (a detergent powder used for washing clothes) that helps to reduce the bad taste of crude oil and removes the black colour before being sold. Children added that this coping strategy is due to the limited alternatives to access food or provide income when oil spill affects family livelihoods.

6.2.1.6   Reliance on the Community or Relatives for Social Support

Another strategy that emerged in all communities relates to the social support from relatives. Across the communities, children talked about the reliance on relatives and neighbours for support such as money to access food until their families find other means of livelihoods. According to a 14-year-old girl from Bodo community, when oil spill ruined the crops in their farm, they had to stop farming for a long time. She added that during this period, her family was able to get some money and food such as cassava from their relatives. This claim was supported by many other children for instance, a 15 year old boy from Bodo Community in Ogoniland stated that '*although oil has not spilled in our farm before, but when oil spilled in a relative's farm, the farm was destroyed, there were no leaves on the surface and we were told that nothing can grow in that farm again. He (the relative) came to our house for some money to start up a business*'. This support strategy was also indicated by parents/carers in Section 6.2.2, when discussing the support given by family members when a relative's farm is affected by oil pollution.

Evidence from these discussions show that family/relatives tend to provide social, financial and emotional support as a coping strategy to deal with the challenges of oil pollution on livelihoods. As noted by Ford-Gilboe (1997), this finding proves that social support in the community is viewed as interpersonal resources available from a network of family and friends. Further, this social support from relatives provides a sense of belonging as well as tangible assistance for dealing with life's problems and tasks.

The above discussions have presented impacts on access to food and coping strategies as narrated by children, the next section will focus on perceptions of parents/carers in the communities.

6.2.2   Parents/Carers': Perceptions and Findings

To begin with, the majority of parents/carers in the FGDs tend to talk about children's access to food by asking some rhetorical questions. For example, a parent in Group D (B-Dere community, Rivers State), stated that '*the oil has ruined our farms and our streams. In this* community *most of us are farmers and fishers, so how do* you expect *us to feed our children*? In another FGD in Beneku community of Delta State, a parent asserted that '*when the rivers are polluted, we try to manage by farming. Even the farms are not productive and government is equally not supporting us. So how can we provide good food*

for the children?' Nonetheless, overall, it was gathered from the FGDs that oil exploration has hampered the roles of parents/carers in providing healthy food for their children; however, these results varied from community to community. Participants were also asked to indicate their main occupation. The aim was to understand the types of livelihoods participants engage in, since they all assert that oil exploration activities have affected their means to provide adequate support for their children.

Figure 6.1: Occupation of Participants
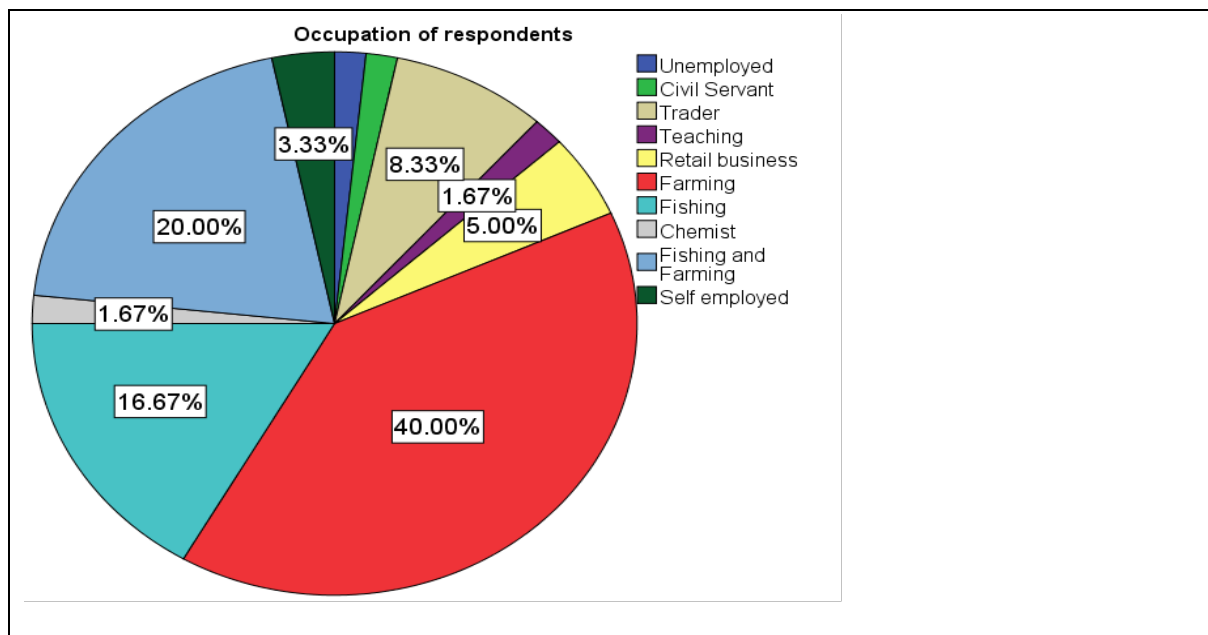
Figure 6.1[23] shows that the main activity across all study communities was farming, representing 40%, while 20% of the participants have farming and fishing as their main occupation. There was also a sizeable proportion (17%) of the participants whose main occupation is fishing. For the 8% of parents classified as 'trader', this involves the selling of foodstuffs and household commodities in the markets, while the 5% of parents classified as 'retail business' own kiosks or small shops outside their homes where they sell drinks, biscuits, kerosene and immediate home needs. It is important to add that most of the participants also combined these main activities with other forms of businesses, such as selling mobile phone recharge cards, as a strategy to provide more income for sustenance.

These findings correlate with the literature in that farming and fishing are the main traditional means of livelihoods of Niger Delta people (UNDP, 2006). The majority of the respondents also added that the impact of oil exploration activities has caused a decline in

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[23] All figures in percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number for discussion purposes

the productivity and sustenance of these livelihoods. This finding supports previous reports from several authors on the threats to local people's livelihoods as a result of oil exploration activities (UNDP, 2006; Onakuse and Lenihan, 2007; Joab-Peterside, 2010). As a result of these difficulties, children have had to support the family by engaging in extra work activities that can provide income. For example, a parent in Imiringi community (Bayelsa State) indicated that '*when our farms were doing well, children were well taken care of, but now most children are left to support themselves*'. Another parent added that '*before now, fishes were found and caught easily but not anymore. We are suffering in this community. It is so hard to take care of children. Children have to do odd jobs to provide food*'.

Across the communities, parents emphasised the emotional distress that oil pollution has caused to families. Specifically, participants compared the loss of livelihoods from fishing and farming activities to the loss of bereavement. It was indicated that when a family's farm/fishing pond is affected by oil pollution, friends and relatives go in groups to comfort and show their support to the affected family just as they would do on condolence visits when a member of the community is deceased. Other than oil spills and gas flares from oil exploration activities, some participants in Gbarantoru community and Ogbolomai community of Bayelsa State also complained that construction works by the oil companies have affected their livelihoods because they disrupt the farm land patterns by allowing water to flood their farms. Similarly, participants in Bodo community of Rivers State added that the Bodo-Bonny road constructed by Shell has caused families to lose their farmlands.

Participants who are not involved in fishing and farming activities explained that since the majority of the people rely on fishing and farming activities, the negative impacts on these activities have a chain of effects on other means of livelihoods in the community. For instance, a participant in Group D (B-Dere community, Rivers State) who is engaged in home building stated that when people's crops are destroyed, they often do not have money to pay for the bamboo[24] jobs, which they requested. Consequently, his children also suffer because he loses income from non-payments from home building jobs.

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[24] The use of bamboo is often relied on for home constructions in the rural regions.

Another interesting finding was the gender issues raised in various groups when discussing parental responsibilities towards children. The majority of the female participants in all communities indicated that despite the destruction of their livelihoods, it is mainly the duty of the mother to provide food for her children. This perception was also noted in section 5.2.2, when parents were asked to give their general perceptions on oil operations in their communities.

The coping strategies to deal with problems of accessing healthy food were similar to the various strategies outlined by children. These included changes in children's staple foods, children skipping meals, reliance on alternative activities or change in work activities and community social/support strategies. However, none of the participants disclosed any knowledge of their children eating polluted crops. Notwithstanding, evidence from the FGDs also suggests that children eat polluted food. This was illustrated when a parent in Beneku community (Delta State) mentioned that due to the destruction of his farm by oil spill; he decided to set up a chemist business mainly as many children in the community were getting sick from eating polluted farm crops and eating contaminated seafood. He also added that the chemist business, which involves selling of medicines, became far more profitable than his farming business due to high incidences of the health risks associated with the negative impacts of oil exploration activities.

Interestingly, one coping strategy that was indicated by parents/carers but not mentioned by children was the use of 'resistance' (see Section 3.5.1). Parents/carers alleged that when farms are affected and they cannot provide food, the youths engaged in conflicts with oil companies operating in their communities to demand some form of relief. It was also mentioned that in some cases, this has also transformed to armed gangs and criminal activities such as hostage taking, sabotage, and illegal oil bunkering as a strategy to escape deprivations. As put by a parent from Beneku community, Delta State: '*since oil pollution has destroyed our agricultural business and we cannot feed our children, our youths get hostile because that has been the only way to get the attention of the oil companies*'.

Participants also indicated that they do not get adequate compensations from the oil companies because they are either informed that payments have been made to the federal government for their land property under the Nigeria Land Use Act of 1978 or that the spill is an act of sabotage. In furtherance to this, discussions with participants also revealed that in rare circumstances where compensations are paid by oil companies, oil companies

negotiate terms of compensation with the community leaders and this practice does not benefit or reward the affected families.

The findings on the problems associated with compensation claims and the process of sharing financial compensation are consistent with previous studies as shown in Chapter Three, which established the role of state complicity in handling community compensation matters (HRW, 1999; Omorodion, 2004; UNDP, 2006). In a study by Hamilton (2011), the author asserts that the system in which local community leaders are put in charge of any compensation paid out by oil companies has also often resulted in inter-intra community conflicts/crises, which were formerly unknown[25].

Having established the perceptions of parents and carers, the next section presents the findings from community leaders on the impacts of oil exploration on children's access to healthy food.

6.2.3 Community Leaders: Perceptions and Findings

Similar to the indications from the parents/carers in the group discussions, all the community leaders interviewed indicated that oil exploration activities have affected children's access to healthy food. They explained that oil exploration activities such as oil spills compromise soil fertility and food production. Respondents noted that the impact of oil spills on farms and streams leads to loss of biodiversity, degradation of farm soil and can impair human life. In Okpai-Oluchi community of Delta State, community leaders claimed that the majority of the local people depend on the fishing activities from the River Niger to feed their children. However, this means of sustenance has become difficult, particularly as some of the untreated wastes from Agip Oil Company operations are discharged into the community river. To put it differently, the chemical waste dumped by Agip into the River Niger, has had a devastating effect on children's access to healthy food.

From the literature, it was noted that oil companies have often been accused of lacking appropriate waste treatment facilities and proper landfills. As such, "untreated wastes are dumped in local community sites which degrade the ecology and harms human health"

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[25] Impacts of inter-intra conflicts/crises as a result of oil explorations on children were not assessed mainly as it was not within the scope of this study

(UNDP, 2006:80). The community leaders also believe that children's access to healthy food is adversely affected as oil companies constantly flout oil exploration regulations and this practice has been sustained due to the negligence and unwillingness of the federal government to enforce compliance with the Nigerian oil exploration regulations. To support this indication, a by Amnesty International, (2009) argued that '*oil companies have been exploiting Nigeria's weak regulatory system for too long…they do not adequately prevent environmental damage and they frequently fail to properly address the devastating impact that their bad practice has on people's lives*'.

Within the same community of Okpai-Oluchi, the female community leader reiterated the information from parents in the FGDs that women are traditionally very active in the community's economy because they are the primary carers of children. However, the loss of livelihoods and poor soil fertility due to pollution has placed untold hardship on women whose primary livelihoods mainly involve fishing and farming. Furthermore, she expressed the same attitudes as the children in the community on the shrinking size of food crops and how that has affected children's access to healthy food. According to the female leader, '*our fish have continued to deplete in quantity and shrunk in size… just like our yams that were big some years ago, are very tiny when harvested*'. In a similar vein, a community leader in Kpean community of Rivers State mentioned parents struggle to provide income for food due to loss of livelihoods and the loss of farmlands acquired by oil companies for oil operations. The leader also added that the increase in community population and competition for available farmlands has resulted in high rates of unemployment, which have further diminished children's access to healthy food.

While discussing children's coping strategies, the majority of the community leaders established that parents/carers often encouraged their children to take up a range of work options including seasonal construction jobs to provide food and support their families. They explained that most families have a large number of children and coupled with the pervasive poverty in the region, these families have limited options on how to cope with providing healthy food when livelihoods are suddenly lost due to oil pollution.

Despite the assertions that large families are prone to suffer more from unhealthy eating due to oil pollution, one of the community leaders in Gbarantoru community of Bayelsa State who indicated that he has 6 wives and 25 children presents a different view. The leader maintained that he had enough farmlands and businesses to cater for his children

until oil pollution destroyed his means of livelihood. When asked what coping mechanism he employs to provide healthy food for his children in these circumstances, he explained that his older children (above 16 years) who have left the community and are working in big cities help to take care of his younger children in the communities. Although he added that his younger children living in he community also engage in some menial jobs to support themselves. Other coping strategies mentioned by community leaders correlated with those indicated by parents/carers such as the reliance on relatives and friends for support. Significantly, the resistance strategy, which involves youth militancy in order to get some compensation from the oil companies, was also mentioned as a coping strategy involving children.

6.2.4   Overview

The findings at children and community levels confirm that oil exploration activities impact negatively on children's access to healthy food, which contradicts the federal government and state's obligation to provide children with access to adequate food as noted in the UNCRC and the CRA. While children's perceptions differ depending on their communities, it did not seem to differ according to age, gender or school status. At the community level, local people's livelihoods are evidenced as being unsustainable, especially as parents are less able to protect themselves from oil pollution and this disrupts the lives of children. Despite efforts to safeguard the Niger Delta food problems through the NDDC master plan programmes and CSR projects by oil companies, the findings from this study tend to suggest that these efforts have largely failed. Food production and access to healthy food in the communities continues to face serious challenges resulting from the adverse consequences of increased oil exploration activities.

Perhaps more importantly, children have adapted some harmful and complex food survival strategies such as skipping meals, swapping nutritional staple food for unhealthy foods and the eating of polluted or contaminated food, etc. These strategies can have significant health risks, which can impact, negatively on the quality of children's lives. Findings also suggest that oil companies and the federal government do not adequately inform children or the wider social groups on how to cope with oil pollution. As noted by Dow (1999) on the impacts of oil spill in a Malaysian fishing community, due to the failure of the state in providing adequate information on impacts of oil spills for the fishers, some fishers took risks and experienced significant losses (such as nets), others went into debt.

It is important to note some specific differences in the coping strategies adopted as narrated by children and those by parents and community leaders. For instance, none of the parents/carers mentioned that their children sometimes eat polluted crops as a coping strategy. A possible explanation for this might be the culpability of parents/carers since the some children indicated that their parents/carers have often suggested eating polluted food as a coping mechanism when faced with the immense challenge from destroyed or polluted farmlands, rivers or ponds. Another interesting finding was that while parents/carers and community leaders indicated 'resistance' as a coping strategy, which involves children in cultism, youth militancy and protests, none of the children mentioned resistance as a coping strategy. A partial explanation could be that children were concerned about the sensitivity of being identified as youth militants or deviants in this type of study.

Further, it was discovered that the traditional local conception of children in the community as vulnerable social beings needing the protection of their parents/carers is gradually eroding due to the negative impacts of oil exploration activities in the communities. Thus, the social change resulting from oil operations has shaped and continues to shape the images of children so that it becomes the present construction in which children are perceived to be competent and independent agents who can provide food by themselves. This finding corroborates the studies of Robson, (2004), Kesby *et al*. (2006) and Skovdal *et al*. (2009) on the roles of children as social actors within African communities. Besides, this finding also situates within the arguments of the 'new social studies of childhood', which conceive childhood as socially constructed and shaped by diverse images of experiences based on gender, class, place and race that should be studied as a social agent of a society.

The next section will present the findings on the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's access to clean water.

6.3   Clean Water

Discussions in this section will begin by presenting children's perceptions, followed by perceptions of parents/carers and community leaders in the study communities. Discussions will also focus on the challenges faced by children and the coping strategies that have been adopted to overcome these difficulties.

6.3.1   Children: Perceptions and Findings

Children access water from different sources, both traditional and modern, within the communities. For traditional sources of water, children mentioned streams, rivers, wells and rainwater, while boreholes and sachet water were grouped as modern sources. Children in the communities were also able to give information regarding the various uses of water and their limitations. For instance, sources of water such as rivers and streams are the most relied on for all purposes. However, during group discussions, children in Groups A and B (both JSS & SSS in Okoloibiri and Tombia communities of Bayelsa State) explained that incidents of oil spills have caused some of their streams/rivers to be polluted and unfit for drinking. In a similar vein, the majority of children in Group F (JSS & SSS, Bodo community, Rivers State) remarked that as a result of the impacts of oil pollution, they stopped drinking water from the river. Similarly, amongst the CNASs, 14-year-old Samson from Bodo community of Rivers State explained that as a result of a spillage in the river they had to stop cooking with water from that particular river.

With regards to coping strategies adopted by children in the event of oil pollution in streams/rivers, the majority of children explained that they put alum (a local purifier) in the water from the river before drinking. Children in Gbarantoru community (Bayelsa State) described this process as "*simply adding alum in water and allowing the dirty particles to settle down before drinking*". Interestingly, the use of alum was not mentioned by children in Ogoniland communities in Rivers State, they instead indicated that when the river is polluted, they relied on well water for drinking and cooking while the river water is still used for bathing, washing and other domestic purposes. Although well water (see Picture 6.1) is an option for the majority to drink from, a small number of children attending school within Ogoniland communities made it clear that they do not drink water from the wells because it is untreated and contaminated by oil pollution such as gas flares.

Picture 6.1: Water from a Well Source in Ogoniland Community, Rivers State

Some children in Ogoniland communities also mentioned obtaining water from boreholes as a coping strategy, although it was expressed that it is an expensive option because only families who can afford to pay can get water from these sources. These findings were not restricted only to the Ogoniland communities but were also indicated in some study communities in Bayelsa and Delta States. In Group B (JSS & SSS, Tombia, Bayelsa State), three of the eight children in the group discussion claimed that they have had to drink polluted water from the river because they couldn't afford to buy water from the boreholes. When probed further on the impacts of drinking polluted water, children explained that the water tasted bad and had adverse effects on their health.

Children also talked about how the impact of oil spill in stream/river can change the pattern of a simple domestic chore. For instance, in the event of an oil spill, getting water from the river can become very difficult, as children have to walk long distances to other streams or queue for a long time in order to get water from boreholes in communities where they exist.

For children in in Okpai-Oluchi community (Delta State), access to clean water was mentioned as a major challenge, because the main river in the community (River Niger) is often inundated with household wastes by local people and chemical wastes by Agip Oil Company. Nonetheless, all children in this community made it clear that they still drink

from the River Niger. As shown in Pictures 6.2 not only is the water from the River Niger filthy and coloured brown, but the river is also used as a rubbish-dumping site.

Picture 6.2: Water from the River Niger in Okpai-Oluchi Community also used as a Rubbish-Dumping Site

Children in Okpai-Oluchi community are not alone in the indication that water from the river is filthy. It was also discovered that there was a general acknowledgement by children in all communities that rivers/streams are often filthy due to sanitation problems in the communities. To explicate this, amongst the CNASs, 16 year old Tim in Ogbolomai community, Bayelsa State mentioned that '*because most homes do not have toilets, people use the river as toilets.* Thus, the river has become swamped with human waste and this often results in various illnesses. Nonetheless, children confirmed that they drink from the filthy rivers since many cannot afford to buy water from boreholes where they exist.

Drawing on the existence of poor toilet facilities mentioned by children, participants were asked to give information on toilet amenities in their home environments. The majority of children indicated that their homes have pit latrines but these latrines are unhygienic and poorly maintained. Consequently, the usual practice is that of toilet on water (which simply means they practise open defecation on rivers and streams) and toilet in the bushes. This practice however, exposes them to many waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea. This information supports the data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2005) in Figure 6.2,

which asserts that the most widespread household toileting facility is toilet on water, covered pit latrines and the bushes.

Figure 6.2: Types of Household Toilet Facilities
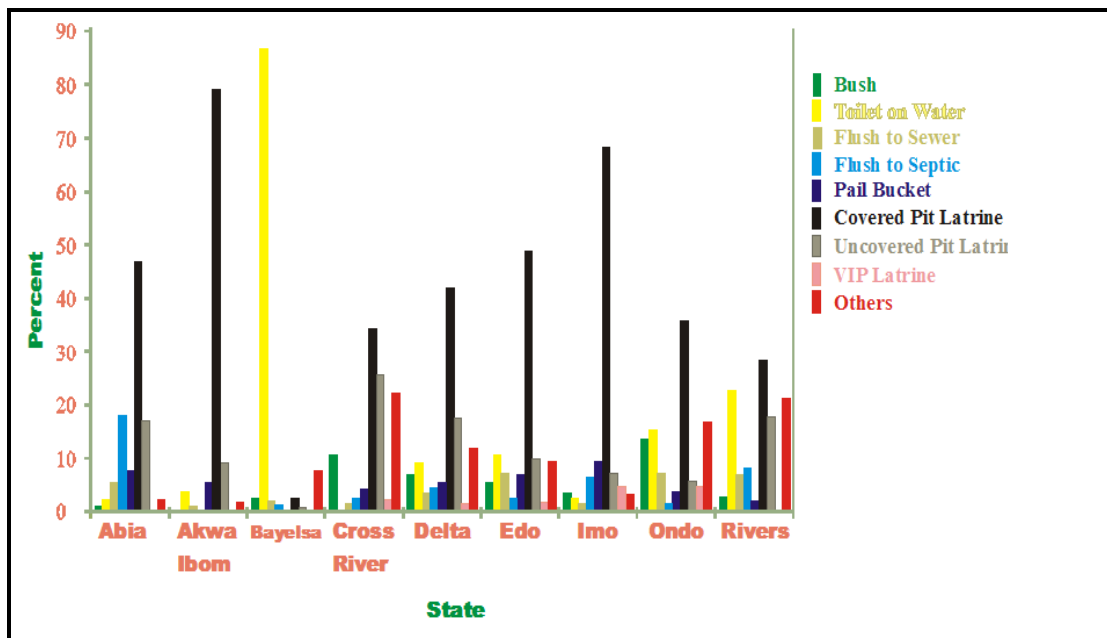
Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2005)

Other than the unhygienic implications associated with water from the river, children in Group G (JSS & SSS, Oporoza community, Delta State), also put forward that the water from their river is very salty and unfit for drinking, although this is still used for domestic purposes such as washing. As alternatives, these groups of children rely on wells, water from boreholes and rainwater.

With regards to the use of rainwater, children also indicated that it has its limitation since it is only collected during rainy seasons. However, many children indicated that oil exploration pollution such as gas flares have polluted rain water making it unfit for drinking and domestic purposes. Generally, children (irrespective of their ages and gender or educational status), believe that rainwater had been destroyed by oil exploration activities and this has increased health risks. The following narratives also explained that children are well aware of the impacts that oil exploration activities have on rainwater. Among the CNASs, 10 year old Joy from Bodo community, Rivers State, explained that *'we used to drink rain water but our elders told us that it is dangerous and can cause diseases. Apart from that it causes the skin to itch so we stopped drinking it'*. Similarly during a FGD, where all participants were below the age of 14 (Group C, JSS, Kpean

community, Rivers State), children clearly demonstrated an understanding of the impacts of acid rain:

> *Tamka*: 'We don't drink rainwater; we only use it for washing because the zinc carries poison from oil pollution'.
>
> *Moderator*: 'Why don't you drink rainwater? Please explain further'.
>
> *Promise*: 'The smoke from the oil spill transfers to the zinc, which pollutes the rain water when it falls'.
>
> *Tamka*: 'So we only use it for washing and bathing because rain water makes people sick if they drink it'.
>
> *Dennis*: 'Although we use it for bathing, it is not good because it causes rashes on the skin.

Despite all the problems associated with rainwater, some children admitted that they still drink it. Their reasons were found to be similar to those given for drinking polluted water from the rivers/streams, which was that their families could not afford water from boreholes all the time. As put by a child in Group D (Primary school, B-Dere of Rivers State) '*we always buy water from the borehole when there is money, but when there is no money, we drink rain water even though it makes us sick and affects our stomachs*'. Similar cases also emerged from Ogbolomai community, Bayelsa State in which some children narrated their experiences of drinking rainwater by alleging that it tastes very bad and they got sick from drinking it. Children also talked about water projects constructed by oil companies and the NDDC. According to the children, water projects are not available in all communities and where they exist, they are often non-functional.

Finally, while children mentioned sachet water as a source of water, this type of water is perceived as most healthy but unaffordable. Children explained that the sachet water popularly known as 'pure water' contains only about 500 ml of water in a clear nylon square pack. Consequently, this was not perceived as children to be a sustainable source of water.

6.3.2 Parents/Carers: Perceptions and Findings

These group of participants indicated that the rivers, streams and rainwater are the main sources of water for children's domestic and personal use. However, similar to reports by children, participants also maintained that, the problems of poor sanitation and oil pollution have damaged children's access to clean water causing health risks. In B-Dere community

(Rivers State), for instance, a parent stated that '*the oil spills in our rivers have caused skin diseases, rashes and tummy aches but we have no choice so our children still drink from the river'*.

While discussing alternatives sources of water, participants in Oporoza community (Delta State) mentioned that the community has only one well from which everyone drink. Parents added that although children drink from the well, the water is untreated and not fit for drinking. Worse still, the well dries up during the dry season and the process of digging up the well constantly is usually unhygienic causing health problems for children who drink from it. On the use of rainwater, participants in all groups asserted that due to effects of acid rain from oil pollution, rainwater, which children usually drink has become a potential source of diseases. The discussion from Group A (Oporoza community, Delta State) illustrate this suggestion:

> *Susan*: 'Children use water from the river, stream and rain water'.
>
> *Kelvin*: 'But the gas flare has destroyed the water'.
>
> *Moderator: Which water is destroyed?*
>
> *Daisy*: 'The rain water and the river especially'.
>
> *Tom*: 'That is because the oil exploration activity is close to the community'.
>
> *Kelvin*: 'The Ase creek is the major river for the community. When oil pollutes it, we are in trouble'.
>
> *Moderator: So how do you cope?*
>
> *Susan*: 'We rely on the rain water'.
>
> *Tom*: 'But it makes children sick because of the smoke'
>
> *Susan*: 'If you spread a white cloth, after sometimes, it turns black because of the gas flare'.
>
> *Moderator: Why do children use rain water if it is makes them sick?*
>
> *Julia*: 'Because the river is too far. So when it rains we are happy'.
>
> *Moderator: What other alternatives do you have?*

> *Julia*: 'We just to filter the smoke from the water with our hands and use it'.

> *Susan*: 'We sometime put alum (locally made purifier) in the water before giving [it] children to drink'.

Parents/carers mentioned that most families couldn't afford to pay for water from boreholes or sachet water for their children; thus, the majority of the participants use polluted water from the stream, rain or river. According to participants, most water projects are mere cosmetic projects that barely function. In Group J, (Ogbolomai community, Bayelsa State) parents/carers indicated that the government state agency NDDC, promised to provide potable water for community use, but this has not been fulfilled. Parents/carers in Group H (Gbarantoru community, Bayelsa State) and Group I (Imiringi community, Bayelsa State) also mentioned that the oil company (Shell) installed a water project, which does not function because it was left for the poor community members to manage. This meant that the community members were expected to provide the fuel/diesel needed to power it and repair it in the event that the water facility was damaged.

In Group D (B-Dere Community, Rivers State), parents/carers expressed a sense of anger when they indicated that not only does the community not have access to clean water, but also during years of oil operation in Ogoniland, the communities were not even connected to the clean water available in the Shell operation sites. This finding corroborates assertions by UNDP (2006:3) that in spite of the substantial flow of oil money to state and local governments, many communities are aggrieved mainly as they see no sign of a government presence in terms of development projects.

Overall, participants revealed that oil exploration activities have negatively affected children's access to clean water, and this has had extensive implications for children's health. Diarrhoea in particular was mentioned as a killer disease, especially for young children in the communities.

6.3.3   Community Leaders': Perceptions and Findings

Similar to the information from parents/carers, the majority of the respondents indicated that pollution from oil exploration activities have affected the community's sources of water such as streams, rivers, ponds and rainwater. They also added that children are being advised not to drink rainwater due to acid rain and the numerous cases of illnesses

associated with it. Respondents also confirmed that children complain of skin rashes and itchy skin when they bathe with rainwater. As stated by interviewee number 2 (Bodo Community, Rivers State), '*our children used to be able to drink the rainwater but now even that has been polluted by gas flaring. The community does not have any source of potable drinking water. We depend on the streams and water from the wells. Some parents that can afford to buy water do so from boreholes* [for] *their children*'.

When probed for children's coping strategies, respondents indicated that the majority of the children who cannot buy water, have no option but to drink polluted water from the streams, wells and rainwater. Community leaders were also asked to give information regarding water projects in their communities. In Oporoza community (Delta State), respondents mentioned an abandoned OMPADEC water project that has never worked since 1997. Respondents in Imiringi community (Bayelsa State) also explained that the problem of unsustainable water projects arises because the oil company entrusts their management to poor community members who cannot accomplish the task. In Beneku community of Delta State, respondents also acknowledged the efforts of oil companies to provide water through water projects however, these efforts, like those in other communities, have not been effective.

Picture 6.3: Non-functional Water Pumps in Ogbolomai Community, Bayelsa State

Overall, respondents felt existing water projects (see Picture 6.3), which could increase children's access to clean water, are often non-functional and unsustainable. During my

visit to Ogbolomai community in Bayelsa State, I observed two non-functional water projects in the community. The first had been commissioned by NDDC; however, informants explained that water was provided for only a week before it malfunctioned because it lacked any electricity supply to power it. Another community leader gave a different version on why the NDDC water project became non-functional. He stated that, '*NDDC started the water project; however, the contractors claim that they have not been fully paid and the project was abandoned*'. Irrespective of the variations in views, both respondents confirmed that the project has been abandoned for about 10 years. The second water project in the same community was an over-head water tank built by Shell, which I was told has stopped functioning for over seven years due to a lack of fuel/diesel to power it.

Similarly, in Okpai-Oluchi community, Delta State, community leaders indicated that the community lack functional water projects. According to participants, OMPADEC (a defunct federal government agency) sank a borehole and abandoned it years ago, while Agip also built another borehole that has never functioned. It was also mentioned that the community did not have any boreholes or wells. Corresponding to the information from children, the leaders explained that the community relies mainly on water from the River Niger, which is often polluted by chemical wastes from Agip Oil Company operating in the community.

Overall, the responses from the community leaders confirmed the information given by children and parents/carers on the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's access to clean water.

6.3.4   Overview

Evidence from this study supports several reports that the NDR is characterised by inadequate access to clean water (NDDC, 2004; Ibeanu, 2008; Amnesty International, 2009; Aaron, 2010a). However, of key importance to this study are some of the differences in the narratives by children and adults. For instance, while children were able to talk about the changes in domestic chores such as getting water from the stream/river in the event of an oil spill, adults often focused on the general challenges of accessing clean water. Additionally, while children talked about the long distances they have to walk or long time

spent on queues in search of clean water, adults in the community did not seem to mention this.

Generally, findings from the study showed that children are the worst hit by clean-water deprivation. The majority of children, irrespective of their ages, gender or educational status, clearly identified various sources of water and the challenges they face to access clean water in their communities. For instance, children explained that, although the water sources such as rivers and streams have sanitation challenges, the oil exploration processes and activities have further exacerbated these problems which also pose serious threats to their health. Particularly, children noted that acid rain, which results from gas flares, has caused rainwater to become unsafe for drinking and domestic purposes.

As mentioned Chapter Three, it was established that access to clean water, especially in the rural areas, is a major problem in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Water Resources & Rural Development, 1992-1995; POLICY Project/Nigeria, 2002; ESMAP, 2005; Salawu, 2010). Additionally, the Nigerian federal government and oil companies consider access to clean water in the Niger Delta communities to be a major problem. In that regard, NDDC programmes and other initiative development programmes, such as oil companies' CSR programmes were reported to target the supply of clean water in Niger Delta communities. However, findings from this study have been unable to demonstrate that the water projects in the communities are effective and sustainable. As children pointed out, the water projects are often 'white elephant projects' and hardly exist. The majority of children also added that where they exist, water projects are unsustainable and not functional because the oil companies often entrust their management to poor community members who cannot afford to maintain or manage them.

While discussing children's coping strategies, the majority of children confirmed that they drink polluted water from oil-polluted rivers. These harmful coping strategies increase children's health risks and show a link between children's poor access to water and poor access to sanitation facilities (waste disposal and toilet facilities). As revealed in Chapter Two, children from poor families are vulnerable and are prone to suffer more than one deprivation such as sanitation deprivation (UNICEF, 2011c; Roelen and Franziska, 2008). Overall, the federal government and the oil companies have a major role to play in providing proper sanitation and sanitation facilities in homes and it is well established that poor access to clean water infringes children's rights since the basic provision of the

Nigerian Children's Rights Act requires every government in Nigeria to strive to provide and sustain safe drinking water for children (UNICEF, 2007).

The above discussions have illuminated the negative impacts of oil exploration activities on children's access to clean water. More so, it has revealed the diverse coping practices adopted by children to address these challenges. The next section will now present the findings and discussions on the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's health and children's access to healthcare services in the study communities.

6.4   Health and Healthcare Services

In this section, findings from children will be presented followed by findings from parents/carers and community leaders. The similarities and differences between these different groups of participants in relation to information identified from the literature will then be discussed.

6.4.1   Children: Perceptions and Findings

Generally, findings from children in all study communities indicate that they are exposed to health dangers from oil exploration activities such as; air pollution, noise pollution, etc. Several cases of significant health risks from oil spills and gas flares were recounted by most children as having damaging impacts on their health. Specifically, children claimed that there is a correlation between the consumption of oil-polluted food and water to skin rashes, stomach aches, diarrhoea and deaths. During interviews with CNASs, 15-year-old Juliet in Okpai Oluchi community (Delta State) stated that '*children are dying as a result of polluted water and food in this community. We get drinking water from the rivers in the bush, the water is not only bad for drinking but it cause death. Some children die while others survive because of the chemists'*. In B-Dere community of Rivers State, 17-year-old Ruth also added that '*some children who ate the crops from the oil spill farms got sick and died*'. In Gbarantoru community of Bayelsa State, 11 year old Simeon noted that due to the problems of oil spills and gas flares, children who are critically ill have to go to the Yenagoa the state capital hospital, however, some children have lost their lives die before they even get there. These findings tend to support assertions in several studies that negative impacts of oil exploration activities are not only significantly correlated with the death of aquatic plants and animals, depletion and destruction of forest resources but also

the premature deaths of humans (Fekumo, 1990; ERA/FoEN, 1998; NDHERO, 1998; HRW, 1999; Aroh *et al.*, 2010).

Findings also show that children from Ogbolomai and Gbarantoru communities of Bayelsa State specifically indicated health risks from gas flares and noise pollution. Children in these communities complained that gas flaring causes eye and skin irritations. As noted in Chapter Three, due to the toxic gaseous pollutants several authors have associated the development of health conditions such as eye irritation, skin disorders, asthma, coughs and other respiratory tract infections to individuals exposed in gas flaring environments (Abbey *et al.*, 1993; Omotola, 2006; Gobo *et al.*, 2009). Noise pollution was mentioned especially as their communities are close to construction sites where loud noises emanate from heavy pipeline construction activities and diesel engines that drive construction equipment. According to Aviwiri and Nte (2003), oil drilling in the Niger Delta environments can cause noise pollution given the explosive nature of the ensuing combustion and mechanical operations from gas/flow stations. This continuous exposure to noise from pressurised gas has also been argued to have negative long-term health implications for the host communities that are exposed (UNDP, 2006).

The majority of the children are also pointed to the poor access to healthcare facilities as a factor that has worsened their health in the communities. Although the majority of children indicated that oil exploration activities are not directly responsible for this problem, many children believe that money that would have been spent on accessing proper healthcare in the towns and cities are often lost due to the loss of income from oil spills on family livelihoods. Additionally, poor accesses to healthcare facilities were pointed by many children as an indication that the community has not benefitted from oil wealth benefits.

Generally, some of the healthcare services mentioned by children are the chemists, clinics, churches, hospitals and traditional medicines (locally made and from traditional healers). With regards to the use of hospitals, children explained that some hospitals exist in the communities, while others are located in the towns. Notably, children added that the town hospitals are too expensive and rarely used except in some medical emergencies or severe medical conditions. As stated by Dennis in Group C (JSS, Kpean community of Rivers State) '*we only go to the town hospital for big illnesses*' while Barelubene added that '*hospitals are too expensive and our families don't have money to pay the bills*'. Given the information from children that hospitals are only used in cases of medical emergencies,

children were asked to provide information on how their parents have paid the hospital bills in such circumstances. The majority of children explained that their parents get support from relatives and family members to offset hospital bills. As narrated by Sandra in Group G (JSS & SSS, Oporoza community of Delta State), '*our parents usually borrow money for hospital bills and pay later*'. Other than the high cost of hospital bills, there was a considerable consensus amongst children that the distance to hospitals from rural communities also acts as a deterrent to the accessibility and utilization of hospital facilities.

Results also showed that the majority of children perceived community hospitals as poor health service providers. For instance, during interviews with CNASs, 16 year old David from Okpai-Oluchi community (Delta State) explained that '*our community hospital is not exactly a hospital, because there are no nurses or staff there. It is just a place*'. In a similar vein, during FGD with CASs, many children talked about several cases where community hospitals lacked effective medical staff, adequate facilities and the proper medical system needed to administer care to patients. The following excerpt was taken from Group H (JSS & SSS, B-Dere community of Rivers State) on the use of community hospitals:

>   *Samson*: 'Nobody uses the community hospital'.
>
>   *Moderator*: 'Please explain why?'
>
>   *Nkor*: 'Because there are no facilities to treat anybody. Sometimes the mortuary attendants bring dead people and leave them outside because there is no facility to keep them'.
>
>   *Boona*: 'There are no proper medical instruments in the hospital'.
>
>   *Npaa*: 'There are not enough doctors in the hospital. It is better to use the chemists'.
>
>   *Kate*: 'Everybody in this community use the chemists or traditional herbs'.

The discussion above tends to suggest that most children in all communities rely mainly on chemists as the main healthcare providers. However, results also reveal that children's choice of healthcare varies between communities and differs between CASs and CNASs For instance, among CASs, the chemists and traditional medicines were evidenced as the most utilised healthcare services. Children who identified the use of chemists expressed that the prescriptions are affordable and sometimes effective. However, according to children, the problem with the chemists is that they only stock limited drugs given that most communities do not have electricity supplies for the cold storage of medicines. In addition, children mentioned that some of the chemists are not trained or qualified

dispensers of prescribed medicines. This assertion by children is supported by the UNDP (2006:4) report that "many poor people in the Niger Delta region turn to unqualified but locally available caregivers resulting from the poor access [to] basic healthcare services and treatment programmes".

Results also reveal that children who use traditional healers or traditional medicines are mainly the CNASs. This group of children claimed that traditional options are inexpensive and provide effective treatment for infections, nutritional disorders and skin ailments. According to Gamaniel *et al*., (2005), traditional medicine practitioners are known to provide cheap and immediate medicines for some ailments, thereby playing a vital role given the dearth of specialist health providers and the unaffordability of the high-cost of urban medical treatment. Although traditional medicine is generally perceived as affordable, there were also cases where children indicated that they relied on this option not because they cannot afford the cost of chemist prescriptions but because they believe that the drugs from the chemist do not cure the 'strange' diseases resulting from oil pollution. Thus, many participants view traditional medicines as an indispensable component of the healthcare system in communities.

Many children who also rely on prayers in churches or from spiritual healers are mainly the CNASs. Children explained that they chose this option because their families could not afford the cost of medicines from the chemists, traditional healers or hospitals. Some authors (Okonofua and Ilumoka, 1991) have argued that the socio-cultural background of people, especially in rural areas, affects family decisions and behaviours concerning the use of these alternative sources of treatment. In this study, the majority of children clearly pointed to financial difficulties as the main reason for their health service options. The narrative below is an excerpt of the interview with 14-year-old Kelvin from B-Dere community (Rivers State) on why he relies on prayers from the churches.

> *Interviewer*: Are there any places you go for healthcare when you are unwell?
>
> *Kelvin*: 'My mum takes me to the church for prayers'.
>
> *Interviewer*: Why do you think she does so?
> *Kelvin*: 'Because she says there is no remedy, so we go to church to pray that the sickness should go away'.
> *Interviewer*: What about the hospital?

Kelvin: 'I have never been to the hospital before'.

Interviewer: Do you use natural herbs?

Kelvin: 'Sometimes, but we also have to pay for it. I take it sometimes to prevent malaria'.

Interviewer: What about the chemists?

Kelvin: 'We don't use it because we don't have the money to pay for the drugs prescribed'.

Similarly in group discussions such as in Group A (JSS & SSS, Gbarantoru community, Bayelsa State), some children narrated experiences of being taken to churches because their parents cannot afford the costs of medicines from chemists of traditional practitioners. Overall, in most cases, the economic status of households is evidenced as a deciding factor for children's access to healthcare services.

6.4.2   Parents/Carers: Perceptions and Findings

The majority of the participants explained that given the poor access to healthy food and clean water, oil exploration activities have had serious implications for the lives of children. During the FDGs, various diseases such as cholera, malaria, stomach pain, rashes, fever, tuberculosis, measles, diarrhoea, headaches, heart problems, convulsion, eye diseases and 'strange' diseases were mentioned as the health impacts of oil exploration activities on children. The following narrative from these groups captures this information properly. In Group G, (Kpean community, Rivers State),

> *Solomon*: 'Because of the oil pollution in our streams the colour of the stream water is different and when our children drink from it, they get all sorts of strange diseases'.

> *Felix*: 'When our children drink polluted water, it gives them running stomach and causes cholera.'

> *Ruth*: 'Even when our children get rain water, the colour of the rain water is different. When children bath with rain water, it itch their skin and causes rashes.'

> *Matilda*: 'These polluted waters affect our children when they drink it or bath with it; sometimes, even the drugs from the chemist cannot cure them'.

In Group J, (Ogbolomai community, Bayelsa State), participants emphasised more on the health impacts from gas flaring;

> *July*: 'Oil exploration has affected our crops. Our crops don't grow well and now our children have strange diseases'.

> *Dede*: 'Gas flaring causes waterborne diseases and heat prone diseases'.

> Mary: 'The emission from the gas flares also affects children's sight'.

These findings corroborate the assertions from various studies in which the health impacts of oil exploration activities such as headaches, skin rashes and eye redness were highlighted (Omotola, 2006; Amnesty International, 2009; Olusegun, 2009; Bayode *et al.*, 2011). To make matters worse, participants claimed that children have limited or no access to proper healthcare when they are unwell. For example, parents in Oporoza community of Delta State admitted that the community healthcare set up by the local government is set up to only provide immunisation services for children and not to treat illnesses.

In the Rivers State study communities, all parents/carers felt that the community hospital only prescribes drugs to be purchased from chemists and the costs of such prescriptions are too expensive. As one parent in Bodo community, Rivers State, put it *'there are no drugs in our hospitals and when medicines are prescribed, we can barely afford them. So we rely on local herbs or the chemist. Sometimes we take children to the herbalist. We cure those children that can survive and the rest dies* [sic.] *off'*. In another group discussion in B-Dere Community, Rivers State, a parent indicated that she relies on local herbal medicine or she takes her children to the church. In Group H (Gbarantoru community, Bayelsa State), parents mentioned the use of chemists due to poor access of healthcare facilities in the community. However, in severe cases it was mentioned that children are rushed to the hospital in Yenogoa the state capital. The problem with this is that some children die before they even get to the town hospital in Yenogoa due to the long distance between the community and the town hospital.

Overall, parents listed three main options that children use as healthcare providers; local/native herbal medicines, the chemist and the church. Of these three options, participants indicated that they relied mainly on the chemists. Nevertheless, the choice of using the chemists also has its challenges. For instance, participants in Okpai-Oluchi community of Delta State mentioned that the logistics of getting to the chemists is a major problem in the community, and this often force parents to use the church or the local/native herbal medicines. Given that the principal means of transportation in the community is the commercial motorcyclist (Okada), participants complained that the 'Okada' drivers take undue advantage of their monopoly of the transportation service by increasing the cost of transportation at will. Parents added that due to the high cost of 'Okadas', children are only taken to the chemists in cases of emergency. Similar to indications by parents in Gbarantoru community, (Bayelsa State), parents in Okpai-Oluchi community (Delta State)

mentioned that children could also die before they get to the chemists. This finding supports Porter's (2010) argument that poor access to transportation can have significant negative impacts of on children and young people's lives.

Overall, the information provided by parents/carers shows that parents believe there is a correlation between oil exploration activities and children's health. However, poor access to healthcare worsens the general quality of children's lives and puts a burden on the parents/carers. As noted by UNDP (2006:4), "making matters worse is the poor quality and accessibility of basic healthcare services — prevention, care, support and treatment programmes are simply not available".

6.4.3   Community Leaders: Perceptions and Findings

Similar to information from parents, there was also a strong belief that oil exploration activities are responsible for 'strange diseases' and premature deaths in children. In most cases these strange diseases are believed to have been contracted when children consume adulterated food or water and/or breathe in air polluted by oil exploration. Participants listed diseases such as kidney problems, stroke, heart problems, skin cancer and anaemia as some of the health problems from oil and gas pollution.

Community leaders also confirmed that the health issues are made worse by the poor state of healthcare services in the communities. For instance, interviewee number 4, Kpean community, (Rivers State) stated that, *'our children have all sorts of strange diseases emancipating from polluted air and water. This also leads to untimely deaths. This is made worse since we have no functional hospital. Most of us use the chemist'*. Participants also threw insights on the assertions of 'premature deaths'. According to interviewee number 10, Okpai-Oluchi community (Delta State), *'...because the crops are polluted, children are sick with infection and strange diseases. It sometimes leads to death because there is no hospital'*.

Given the poor access to health-care services in the communities, respondents also confirmed that children are generally taken to chemists when they are unwell. Remarkably, one important finding emerged during the interview with the women leader in Okpai-Oluchi community (Delta State). Unlike her male counterparts, the female representative shed light on the state of pregnant girls and health impacts on infants in the community. According to the women leader, there are dire consequences for the health of expectant

mothers and their unborn babies when they have to rely on chemists, especially in case of emergencies. The community leader claimed that the means of getting to the chemist is an issue of concern given that the only means of transport is the commercial motorcyclist, which is often a menace and very exorbitant in cost. As mentioned earlier, the leader also added that since communities lack electricity and clean water the chemists do not usually stock perishable drugs, which could be lifesaving in case of an emergency. Further, the logistical problem of accessing the chemists (located within the communities) is made worse when pregnant girls need emergency care and need to be rushed to the hospitals (located outside the communities). Consequently, there are numerous cases of pregnant girls delivering their babies on their way to these town hospitals and unfortunately, there are human fatalities as some children die before they get to the hospitals in town.

In a different vein, a community leader in B-Dere community (Rivers State), talked about an existing community health centre that is however, poorly functional. To gather more information, the researcher visited the hospital for observations.

Picture 6.4: B-Dere Community Hospital (front view)

Picture 6.5: B-Dere Community Hospital (side view)
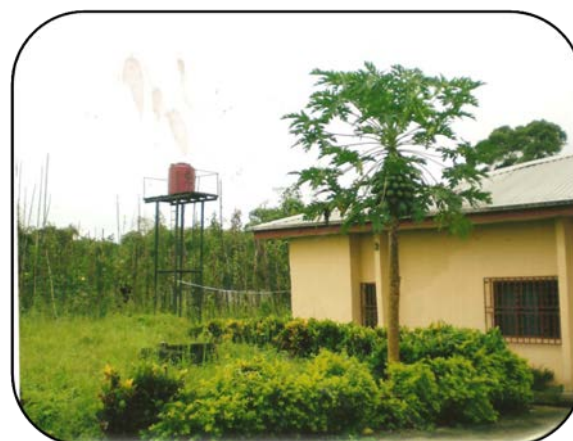
The B-Dere community health centre as shown in Pictures 6.4 and 6.5 appeared to be well constructed with an overhead water tank sighted beside the hospital as shown in Picture 6.5. However, it was observed that the hospital has no functional water supply despite the overhead tank sited outside, hence the toilets, which are water closets, were also not

functional. There was no electricity supply in the hospital at the time of the visit and the hospital appeared inoperative, as there were no doctors, nurses or patients. However, I met with a health worker who explained that the hospital was constructed by Shell while medicines used to be provided by the federal government. Following the Shell and Ogoni crisis, the hospital lost all its doctors and since the community lacked basic amenities, qualified doctors prefer to be posted in urban areas outside the community. Given the inadequate facilities, the hospital was said to only accept outpatients, and provides only very minimal care for children. This observation tends to provide a partial explanation why majority of the local people rely more on chemists, churches and native herbs.

6.4.4   Overview

As noted in Chapter Two, general access to healthcare services in Nigeria is poor and the country's poor health situation is evidenced by the poor maternal and child health situation which are the indicators of a society's level of development (UNICEF, 2011c). However, there is strong suggestion in this study that oil exploration activities impact negatively on children's health. Findings show that in the Niger Delta region, children's health risks are worsened by the damaging impacts of oil exploration activities on food and water in the communities. For instance, the majority of the children linked the consumption of polluted foods and the utilisation of polluted water to the increase in children's health problems. More so, children living in communities such as Ogbolomai and Gbarantoru communities (Bayelsa State) where gas is being flared complained of eye problems.

As suggested in Chapter Two, a UNICEF report mentioned that water and food deprivation have direct impacts on children's health (UNICEF, 2011c). Udoette (1997), also noted that given that health is connected to the web of food in the Niger Delta region, asserts that ingestion of hydrocarbons directly or indirectly through contaminated food leads to poisoning. At the community level, findings from parents/carers and community leaders were found to support children's assertions on how oil exploration activities impact on their health. Parents also corroborated narratives from children on the poor and inadequate access to healthcare services in the communities. For instance, the majority of children claimed that where community hospitals exist, they lack healthcare facilities such as proper staffing, prescriptions and technical services.

However, this information does not seem to be consistent with investigations at the national level (Chapter Five), where representatives of NDDC development agency and the oil companies claim to have primary healthcare projects and community health hospitals as part of the health development agendas in the communities. While some community health buildings were sighted, it was also observed that they were not functional and lacked basic hospital facilities such as proper staffing, electricity and water. What is more, the evidence pointing to the over-reliance on low-standard chemists as the main healthcare service providers clearly depicts the poor state of healthcare facilities in the communities. Apart from chemists, children tend to also rely on local/native herbal medicines, faith (praying at the church) than hospitals due to poor access to healthcare services in the communities and the unaffordability of hospital bills. Another important finding was that children's health deprivation resulting from oil exploration activities could be correlated with child poverty, which tends to diminish children's quality of life.

Linking these findings to the provisions of the 2003 CRA as ratified by the federal government, we may conclude that the federal government and oil companies do not take into consideration, the necessary measures to safeguard and protect children's right to health during oil exploration activities. From the foregoing, the information gathered calls for policy makers to enforce laws and take necessary measures regarding oil operations in the NDR to secure a healthy environment in which children's health are not undermined and their rights to health and healthcare services are not violated.

The next section will focus on participants' perceptions of the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's access to adequate housing facilities.

6.5 Housing Facilities

In this section, perceptions on housing facilities will be assessed from two specific areas: children's access to shelter and children's access to electricity supplies. Many participants perceived shelter to be fundamental to a child's wellbeing and electricity was mentioned as significant to accessing medical care, water purification and educational facilities in schools. The outline on perceptions and findings will begin with children's views followed by those of parents/carers and community leaders.

6.5.1 Children: Perceptions and Findings

The majority of children explained that most houses in the communities are mud houses built with puddle, wood, bamboo and thatch roofs (see Picture 6.6). However, there also existed some modified versions of houses built with corrugated-iron sheet roofing rather that thatch. Many children mentioned that the roofs, whether thatch or zinc are particularly prone to the damaging effects of acid rain from gas flaring. Children who live in thatched roof houses remarked that due to acid rain, the thatch do not last long and needs constant repairs. Similarly, children living in zinc-roofed houses also reported that the gas flames from oil exploration activities cause damage to their roofs and often turns the zinc colour to black. These findings tend to corroborate the results from Uyigue and Agho's (2007) study which reported that in the rural communities of the region, most houses are roofed with zinc-plated galvanized sheets which are prone to rust faster when acid-rain falls on them. Consequently, the process of repairing or replacing the roofs causes people to spend vast resources and increases people's poverty.

Picture 6.6: Thatched Roof Houses in Ogoniland, Rivers State

While discussing access to electricity supply, children in Okpai-Oluchi community (Delta State) indicated that the community has never had any rural electrification. Thus the community has never enjoyed any form of electricity supply from either the federal government or the oil companies. In contrast, children from Oporoza community (Delta State) indicated that their community have constant access to electricity supply provided

by Shell/Chevron Oil Companies. Other than these two communities, the majority of the children indicated that their communities have irregular or scarce electricity supply. Within the Ogoniland communities, where irregular electricity supply was talked about, children mentioned that 'irregular' in this context means that electricity could be available for a couple of days and then be absent for long periods of months. Many children do not perceive this electricity supply as any good. As noted by 14 year old Kelvin in B-Dere community (Rivers State) '*I have never seen light [sic] in my community. I only see some houses with [electric] generators*'.

To cope with the challenges of poor access to electricity supply, many children highlighted the use of candles, electric generators and local lamps as the main sources of electricity in their communities. Of all the children who participated in this study, only a 17-year-old girl (Christy) from B-Dere community admitted to having electric generator in her home. Christy, who is a trader, explains that her trade involves selling soft drinks and people do not buy these drinks unless they are chilled. Consequently, she has to employ an electric generator for her business.

The use of the local lantern as a coping strategy is particularly popular and described as cheap and easy to make. The general problem with the local lamp, however, is that it smells badly and creates thick black smoke that can cause respiratory problems such as chesty coughs. As put by Frank (16 year old from Kpean community, Rivers State), '*I don't like using Nkpuka* [name for local lantern], *because it causes smoke emission which affects the chest and makes breathing difficult. It makes me cough and smells badly*'. Kate (14 year old girl in Bodo community, Rivers State) also added that '*I don't like Nkpuka because it leaves black debris in our noses by morning and it stains our cloths*'. Although local lamp is widely use, findings show that it can cause respiratory problems due to its poor design and the thick smoke emaciating from the lamp.

Overall, while many children do not associate the problems of electricity supply to oil exploration activities, they however believe that oil-producing communities should benefit from constant electricity supply. In addition, they put forward that due to the income lost from oil pollution on livelihoods, money that would have been used for electric generators and its maintenance are often used to deal with damages caused by oil pollution.

6.5.2 Parents/Carers: Perceptions and Findings

Overall, the majority of the participants indicated similar perceptions to those of children such as the adverse effects of gas flares and acid rain to thatched and zinc roofs. The result is that families are forced to constantly replace their roofs. As a parent put it '*the pollution affects our zinc. Look at our zinc, they have holes and have turned black. Our thatched houses do not last long again*'.

Regarding rural electrification, participants also noted similar results as children. In Bayelsa State and Rivers State communities, participants explained that the community only enjoys irregular electricity supply. The majority of the participants in Rivers State indicated that for a region that has so much fuel resources and is involved in oil exploration activities, one would have expected the communities to have an electricity supply but that is not the case as they do not have any electricity supply at all. However, in Oporoza community (Delta State) the community enjoys constant electricity supply by Shell/Chevron oil companies as a result of the youth crisis in 2007.

In Beneku community of Delta State, experiences were different as participants in this community indicated that Agip provided an electric generator for community use. However, at the time of the visit, the community was said to be lacking electricity supply. As expressed by a parent during a group discussion in Beneku community '*before now, Agip provided us with light [from] 6am to 6pm, but that was just from the eve of Christmas to the 2nd of December [2007]. As you can see we are in total darkness. It is just in paper that it is 6pm to 6am so that our youths can keep quiet*'. The electricity generator has since been left for the local people in the community to run and maintain. The grievance of the local people, however, is that the project is unsustainable and due to the pervasive poverty in the community, parents cannot contribute efficiently to purchase the diesel needed. In effect, the community is left without rural electric power.

In Okpai-Oluchi community, Delta State, a parent in the FGD indicated that '*while other communities talk about lack of electricity supply, we do not even have an electric poles in this community*'. Participants in the group explained that the community has never had any electricity supply and there seem to be no plans in that area of development by oil companies or the federal government. Parents/carers added that they are very unhappy with the situation given that the community is one of the hosting communities for the IPP Power

plant project, which is meant to end gas-flaring operations and produce about 480 megawatts of electricity for Nigeria. A feeling of disappointment also resulted from the information that, as host communities to the IPP power plant project, the promise of electricity supply has remained unfulfilled. Apart from the non-electrification of the community, parents in Okpai-Oluchi community added that the heat from the plant turbine is so problematic, especially at night, causing children a lot of discomfort.

On the coping strategies adopted to provide lighting for household uses, participants indicated the use of lanterns, candles, hurricane lamps and electric generators. Participants also indicated that the one most widely used is the locally made hurricane lamp (local lantern) which has some major health risks for children. For instance, parents indicated that the smoke from the local lanterns affects children's eyes and precipitates coughs and chest infections.

6.5.3   Community Leaders: Perceptions and Findings

All respondents indicated that the impacts of gas pollution, such as acid rain, have affected children's homes, especially the roof, which implies that resources meant for children's basic needs are sometimes used to replace roofs. On the subject of electricity supply, the majority of the interviewees confirmed that rural electrification is lacking in most communities. As put by Interviewee number 11, (Okpai-Oluchi, Delta State) '*this community has never had electricity supply, you cannot even find electricity poles in this community but there is constant electricity supply in the oil company facilities*. Another respondent from B-Dere community in Rivers State added that**, '***for the past two years, there has been no electricity in this community. The electric poles you see are mere cosmetic. As you can see, I have two generators. When one is bad due to incessant use, I use the other one until I can repair it* [sic.]'*. Respondents also explained that in the absence of electricity supply, the majority of the families rely on lanterns, candles and local lamps. In communities such as Ogbolomai and Imiringi in Bayelsa State, where respondents indicated that their communities have an irregular electricity supply provided by the state government, it was also observed that community leaders did not associate this with any sign of positive developments or oil benefits.

6.5.4   Overview

Overall, findings show that children have poor access to shelter and housing facilities. However, it is important to interpret the results with caution. For instance, while children indicated direct links between gas flares, acid rain and their damaged roofs, they however suggested that oil exploration activities are not directly responsible for poor rural electrification in the communities. Rather, many children believed that income lost from family livelihoods as a result of oil pollution, could have helped to purchase private electric generators. Further, children perceived the lack or irregular access to electricity supply, as a disappointment especially when the community is contribution to the enormous national oil wealth.

While discussing access to shelter, the majority of children who live in thatched houses complained that acid rain affects their roofs causing the thatch to leak and in need of constant repairs. Similarly, children living in zinc roofed houses also complained that the gas flare discolours and destroys their zinc. This information was corroborated by parents/carers and community leaders at the community level who also agreed that acid rain destroys and leaves holes in their roofs. According to parents/carers, family resources which would have contributed to children's wellbeing are used to constantly repair damaged roofs.

The findings from this study corroborate reports that the Niger Delta people have some of the worst forms of human shelter, electricity and housing facilities in the region (NDDC, 2004; Amnesty International, 2009). Although the 2006 Human Development Report on the Niger Delta noted that the difficulty of the delta's terrain often undermines people's access to fundamental services, the quality of children's lives are worsened when the federal government and oil companies generally neglect the adequate provision of infrastructures such as proper housing facilities and electricity supplies. As noted by the 1989 UNCRC and the 2003 Nigeria CRA Act, provision of adequate housing facilities for children is said to be fundamental to improving the quality of children's lives.

Besides, according to the UNDP (2006), in a region that produces so much fuel, the electricity supply is very sporadic. The delta could be served with thermal power stations strategically located to serve the needs of every part of the region. But this is not the case as the literature review indicated that lack of rural electrification leaves the rural poor

without access to electricity and they must either spend relatively large amounts of their scarce financial resources on energy, or a disproportionate amount of time collecting firewood (UNDP, 2006; Niez, 2010). In addition, according to UNICEF (2011c), rural electrification is becoming increasingly important to improving children's healthcare and education. Furthermore, as Barnes (2007) suggests, electricity used for powering home appliances reduces house chores for children and the use of light bulbs instead of candles, encourages children to study in the later hours of the day enhancing educational and leisure benefits.

6.6   Chapter Conclusion

This chapter reveals that oil exploration activities have negative impacts on children's access to food, and children have adopted some coping strategies harmful to their well-being. However, discussions also showed some contradictions in children and adult voices. For instance, while children talked about harmful coping strategies such as consumption of polluted foods, adults at the community level did not perceive this as an important experience. Furthermore, while children talked about coping strategies such as trading in polluted crops to provide income for the family, this was not indicated by adults at the community level. Children's narratives also revealed how they negotiate their environments to cope with problems of oil pollution. For instance, taking up of alternative work activities reveal that children are not 'passive' victims as often portrayed by international institutions such as the UNCRC. Evidence also shows that children are active actors of the society and parents often rely on them to support the family when the family livelihoods are destroyed by oil pollution.

Children's narratives on water sources revealed that children understand their environments and the challenges they face as a result of oil pollution. Evidence also reveals that oil exploration activities have shaped and continues to shape children's access to water. Majority of the children said with clarity that negative impacts of oil exploration activities such as oil spill, gas flares and effluent waste discharge, have undermined their access to clean water in the communities. For instance, when oil spill pollutes the rivers, it worsens the problems of sanitation in the communities and children face huge disruptions in their everyday lives. Particularly, children's narratives reveal the difficulties in domestic work activities such as getting water from the stream in the event of oil spill. Children's narratives also revealed that they have adopted some harmful coping strategies such as

drinking of polluted water from oil spilled rivers/streams, since many families are not able to afford the cost of water from boreholes, where they exist. To make matters worse, children talked about the state of unsustainable and non-functional water projects in the communities which are constructed by the oil companies and the NDDC.

The impacts of oil pollution on children's health were also indicated as a major cause for worry in the communities. Many children talked about a range of problems such as body rash from bathing with rain water and eye problems from gas flaring. Problems of children's health issues are made worse by the poor access to healthcare facilities in the communities. The majority of children talked about the reliance of chemists as the main health provider in the communities. However, children also talked about the limitations of the using the chemists such as the indication that chemists do not stock perishable medicines due to poor rural electrification in the communities. Children also provided information on the negative impacts of oil exploration activities on housing facilities. Children specifically talked about impacts of acid rain caused by gas flares on the zinc and thatched roofs in their communities. The implication is that it places a lot of burden on parents/carers who expend income to replace and mend roofs.

Overall, children's narratives show that oil exploration activities have negatively affected children's well-being, and have contributed to family poverty and deprivations. The next chapter will focus on children and adult's narratives in relation to education, work activities and play spaces in the study communities.

7
CHAPTER SEVEN
IMPACTS OF OIL EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES ON CHILD EDUCATION, WORK AND PLAY SPACES

7.1   Introduction

This chapter will present and discuss participant's perceptions regarding the impacts of oil exploration activities on (i) children's access to education, (ii) children's work activities and (iii) children's play spaces. The chapter also presents participants' suggestions on how to enhance the lives of children in the Niger Delta region. The chapter then draws its conclusion from all the information gathered on all the themes.

7.2   Education

Findings regarding children's access to education will be presented and discussed based on the responses of seven groups of participants namely; children not attending schools (CNASs), children attending schools (CASs), school representatives, parents/carers, community leaders, oil companies and the Niger Delta Academic Foundation, NGO.

It is important to mention that the schools visited in the study areas are government schools (public schools), which are part of the free UBS educational system proposed by the federal government. While several churches and privately owned secondary schools exist, the focus of this study was on children attending government public schools. Discussions will not only focus on the impacts of oil exploration activities on access to education but will also explore participant's views on the challenges to child education and the quality of education provided in these rural communities.

7.2.1   Children: Perceptions and Findings (Children Not Attending Schools)

All children not attending schools (CNASs), identified 'lack of funds to pay school fees/levies' as the main reason why they are out of school. However, the CNASs had different educational statuses, which have been classified into three categories; A, B and C. Category A comprise of children they were unable to continue their education after

'*completing*' certain levels such as primary or junior secondary school (JSS) programmes due to lack of funds. Category B is made of children that dropped out of school '*without completing*' particular levels of education such as primary or JSS school programmes due to lack of funds, while category C, includes children that have never attended any formal level of education.

One unanticipated finding was that majority of the CNASs fall into category C of children 'never been to school' as shown in Figure 7.1. This was surprising mainly as literature reviews showed that the federal government agencies, oil companies and UBE programmes have all reported high rates of child education attendance in the Niger Delta region.

Figure 7.1: Education Background of Children Not Attending Schools- CNASs
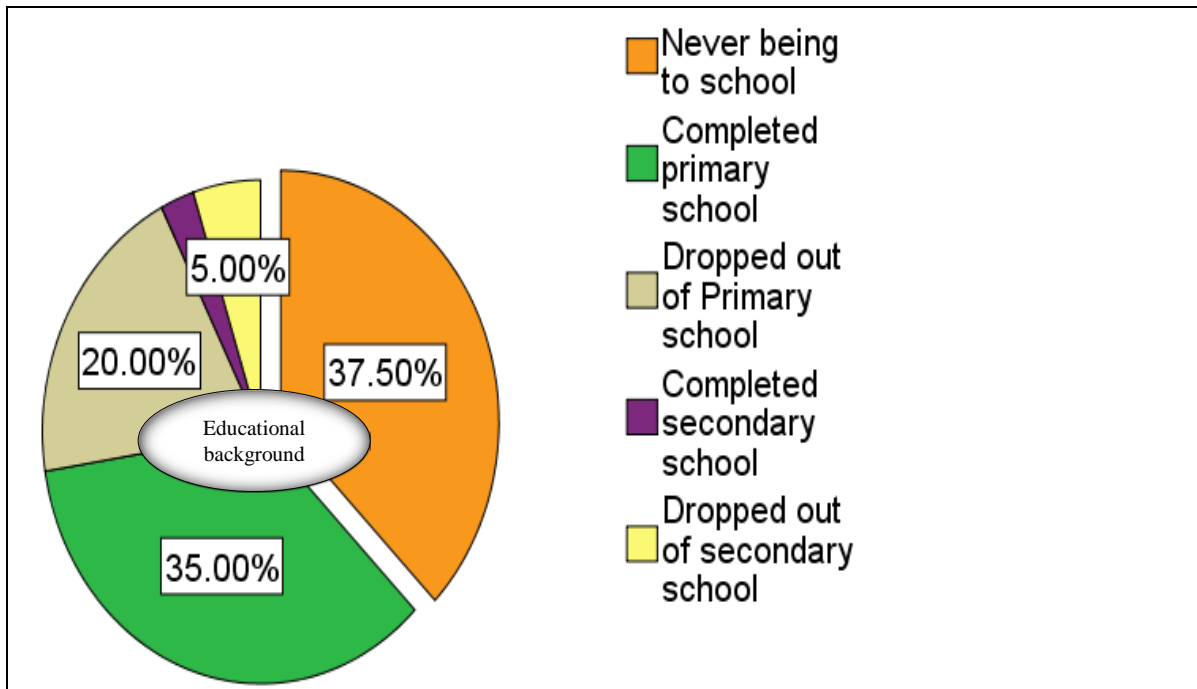
It was also observed that most of the children in categories A and B could communicate in English language, their local language and in 'Pidgin' or 'Broken' English (the creolised version of English). However, in category C, the majority of children could only communicate in Pidgin English and their local languages. Despite the fact that I had no problems understanding Pidgin English, the majority of children in category C preferred to answer questions in their local language. Consequently, most of the information gathered from children in category C was based on the use of language interpreters due to language barriers.

Based on children's narratives, the UBE free educational system by the federal government is not free in its entirety as they have to pay P.T.A. levies, school fees or exam levies before they can be allowed to write the school exams. Additionally, children complained that the cost of other associated school requirements such as school uniforms, school shoes and schoolbooks is a burden on their poor families. These findings support various studies which argue that the portrayal of the UBE programmes as 'free' is wrong and misleading because, in reality, children have to pay the various fees which are approved by the federal and state governments (Adesina, 2000; Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Uwameiye, 2005).

The CNASs were then asked to give information regarding access to the various educational scholarship programmes provided by private individuals, the federal government or the oil companies as indicated in the literature. An overwhelming majority said they were unaware of any existing scholarship/bursary programmes in their communities. Particularly, none of the children who dropped out at primary school levels or after completion of primary schools programmes were aware of these scholarship awards. The rest of the children who showed considerable awareness of scholarship programmes were mainly children who dropped out of secondary schools and have had some friends on scholarships.

7.2.2   Children: Perceptions and Findings (Children Attending Schools)

During the FGDs with children attending schools (CASs), children revealed the multi-dimensional nature of the problems and challenges in accessing education in the communities. Amongst these problems, the high cost of school fees/levies was indicated as the major challenge encountered by children. It was also noted that while most schools register children for free, children have to pay the school fees/levies before they are allowed to partake in the school exams at the end of each academic term. Children also explained that, some schools expect children to pay school fees, school levies or both, while children who are beneficiaries of scholarship programmes are exempted from these costs. As shown in Figure 7.2[26], a large number of children either pay school levies (44%) or school fees (31%) while a few children (16%) are on scholarships.

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[26] All figures in percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number for discussion purposes.

Figure 7.2: Child Education-School Fees/Levies
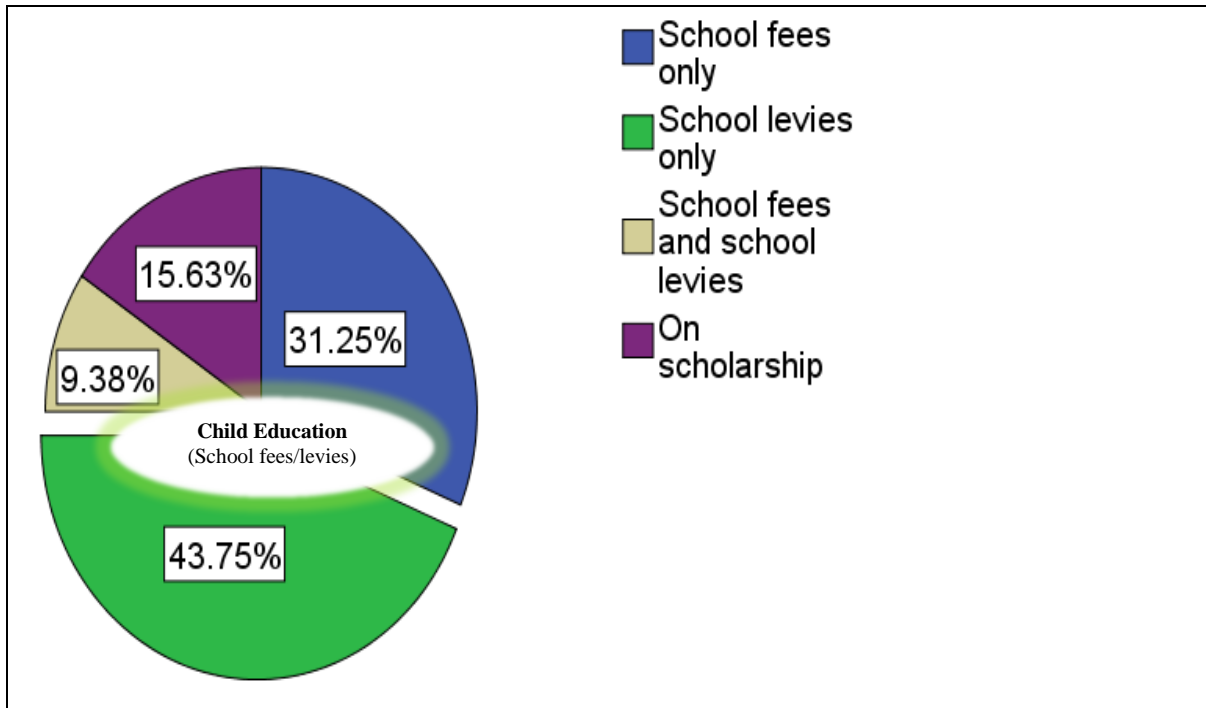
With regards to the children on scholarships, the award is often provided by private individuals and oil company scholarships but not the federal government or NDDC agencies. The award is meant to cover tuition fees and exam levies but not the associated costs such as PTA fees, books, shoes, and uniforms which are provided by their parents/carers. Furthermore, none of the children in primary schools were beneficiaries of oil company scholarships. As explained by the children, oil companies do not award scholarships to primary school children but only to children in secondary and tertiary institutions. Therefore, all the primary school children on scholarships are beneficiaries of private individual scholarships awards.

Referring to the range of coping strategies adopted by children to deal with the high cost of education, some children indicated that, after paying school fees/levies, their families often could not cope with the burden of buying school uniforms, shoes, bags, books and paying P.T.A levies in schools. Consequently, as a coping strategy, they often attend schools without books, shoes, or breakfast. As shown in Picture 7.1, the researcher observed some children in schools without any footwear.

Picture 7.1: Some Children in Schools without Any Footwear

Some other children also explained that because their parents could not afford the high cost of school fees/levies, they register in schools (for free) at the beginning of school term, but drop during exam periods since the school will not permit them to sit for their exams without settling the school bills.

Apart from the high cost of school fees, the other main problem associated with access to education is the poor transportation system within communities. As shown in Figure 7.3[27] a majority of the children (92%) indicated that they walk to school, while a few students (2%) use the motor bicycle (okada), another 2% ride bicycles to schools and some children (2%) use car transportation to schools. Children who walk to school explained that they have to walk long distances from their homes and that this results in irregular attendance or complete dropping out in some cases. As noted by Porter (2010), poor access to rural mobility can increase travel distance to schools, since schools are not often situated in every settlement. This finding also corroborates arguments by Olusegun and Olufunmilayo (2008) that some children in the rural riverine areas find the long distance of waterways a phenomenal task and as such drop out or do not enrol at all.

The small percentage (2%) of children who take the motorcycle, car or bicycle did not seem to complain about the cost or the distance to school because they join their parents who work as teachers in their schools.

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[27] All figures in percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number for discussion purposes.

Figure 7.3: Children's Means of Transportation to School
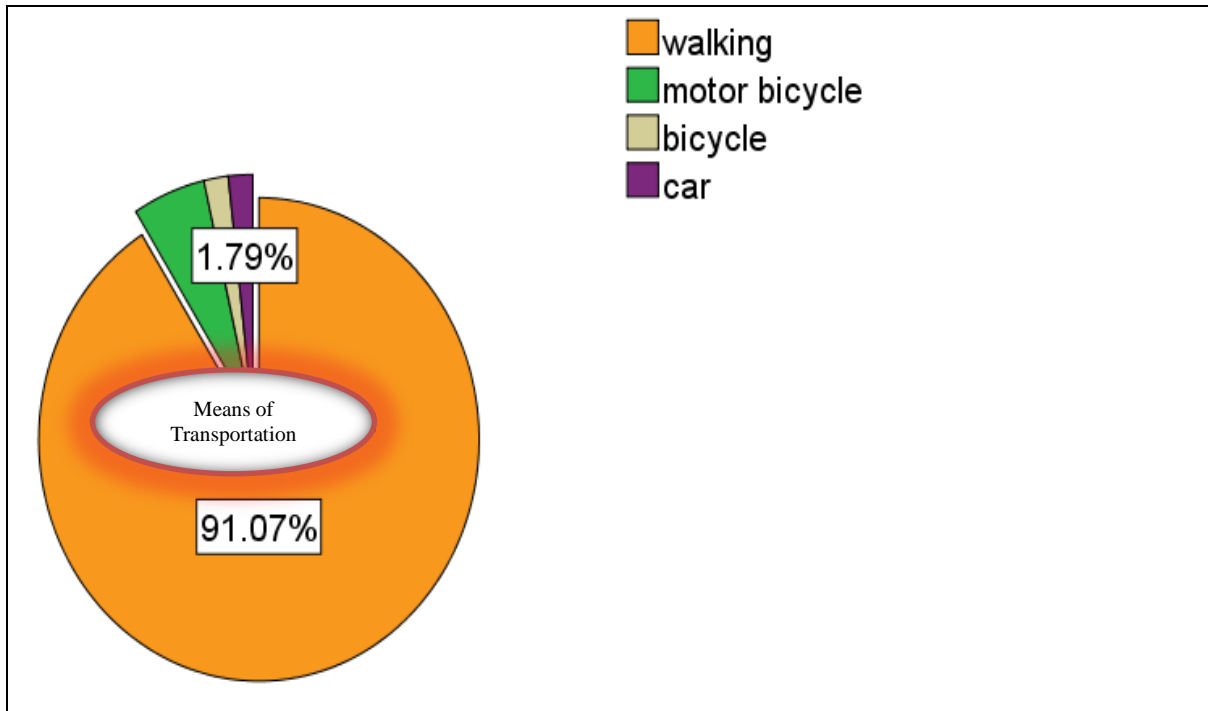
In addition, some children who walk to school laid very strong emphasis on the unsafe and narrow paths through which they have to walk to get to school (see Picture 7.2). As a child in Group E (Primary school, Bodo community Rivers State) explained; '*I do not like the road to my school; it is too narrow, dangerous and too small.*'

Picture 7.2: Primary School Children Walking To School through a Narrow Path

The following sub-sections will focus on children's perceptions on the access to basic facilities in the school environment.

7.2.2.1   Access to Clean Water in the School Environment

Having clean water supply and drinking water facilities as noted in Chapter Two is essential for children to stay healthy in school environments (UNICEF, 2011c). However, the qualitative research confirmed that children lack access to clean water in most school environments. Children in groups A, B and D indicated that their schools do not have any source of water, while children in groups C, E, G and F explained that their schools have a well from which they drink water. However, they were quick to add that the water from the well is not good for drinking because it is untreated and contaminated by oil pollution. As put by Precious in Group G, '*the water from the well is dirty and not good for drinking but we still drink from the well*'. Picture 7.3 captures a well from one of the schools in the study communities.

Picture 7.3: Well for Drinking Water in a School Environment

In Group F, children confirmed that the school provides clean water through an over-head tank powered by electric generator. However, the generator is often faulty, thereby needing constant repairs. At the time of visit, I was informed that the generator was not functional and has been faulty for a long time. As coping strategies some children bring water from their homes while others buy pure water (sachet water) from nearby shops.

7.2.2.2   Access to a Library Facility in the School Environment

According to Correa (1997), the library is the place where teachers and pupils come into contact with 'the world,' i.e., where they acquire their general knowledge, which forms the basis for all further learning. However, findings from this study indicate that children generally lack adequate access to library facilities in school environments. Children in all groups except Group G pointed out that their schools do not have a library. Children in Group H explained that, although their school has a designated library space, the library lacks books and is hardly functional. According to children in this group, it is more a space for reading their own books than a space with access to more information and reading materials.

These findings corroborate the arguments from various authors that the state of school libraries in Nigeria does not meet standard specifications. They argue that most of the public school libraries, especially in rural areas, are stacked with old and out-dated books and most library spaces do not have adequate chairs, tables, fans or library staff (Ojoade, 1993; Adetoro, 2004). Other authors have also noted that library services play an important and integral part in national socio-economic development and that the poor access of school libraries is strongly correlated with poor performance by school pupils (Usoro, and Usanga, 2007). Thus, there have been various studies suggesting the overhauling of rural school libraries as a strategy to enhance the effective performance and development of the Nigerian Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes (Okiy, 2003/2005).

7.2.2.3   Access to a Science Laboratory in School Environments

Several authors have argued that science laboratories are vital factors for science development in the Nigerian educational spectrum, particularly as they provide an opportunity to put into practice the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom (Adeyemi, 1990; Osobonye, 2002; Ogunmade *et al*., 2006). In addition, authors have indicated that quality and standard science laboratories in schools help to sets the foundation for science graduates in the tertiary institutions. However, the majority of children in this study indicated that they do not have access to science laboratories in their schools. In Groups D and E (represented by primary school children), participants explained that the school curriculum does not involve the use of science laboratories so the schools are not equipped with them. Hence the focus was more on secondary schools where science subjects are taught.

Children in Groups F and H pointed out that their schools have science 'laboratories spaces', however, similar to the state of school libraries, children explained that the labs are not equipped and they not functional. As shown in Picture 7.4, children indicated that most of the lab equipment is out dated and dusty because they are no longer used or needed. Worse still, the laboratories have poor storage facilities, which also affect the durability of lab equipment.

Picture 7.4: Showing the Poor Standards of a Science Laboratory in a Secondary School

7.2.2.4   Access to Toilet Facilities in the School Environment

Despite the information at the national level that schools in the region are built by oil companies, the federal government and the NDDC, not one school visited had a functional toilet facility. For instance, in Group H, participants mentioned that although a pit toilet exists in the school, but with lack of water and proper sanitation, the tendencies are, of course, that the pit toilet is left in a dreadful state. When asked about their coping strategies, all participants made clear that they use the 'bushes' popularly referred to the 'creeks', as toilets (see Picture 7.5). Other than the use of the bushes, children who live close to the schools go home if they need to use toilets while at school. A further probe into the use of bushes revealed that children raised health concerns about the adverse effects of open defecation in the bushes such as infections, diseases and attacks by poisonous reptiles.

Picture 7.5: Children Going Into the Bushes Used As Toilet in a School

7.2.2.5   Access to Electricity Supply in School Environments

The majority of children indicated that their schools do not have access to electricity supply. The few children who mentioned that their schools have electricity supply also specified that it is limited to staff offices and staff use only. However as noted by Nwana (2012), a regular electricity supply will enhance the use of e-learning and the potency of education technology availability of computers in classrooms, computer laboratories, etc.

7.2.2.6   Access to Computers Facilities

The question on children's access to computer facilities was explored because computer facilities and other information and communication technology (ICT) tools have the potential to enhance the environment for learning. However, the majority of children mentioned that they do not have access to computer facilities in their schools. In Groups such as A, F and G where children mentioned the availability of computer facilities, they also emphasised that these are meant for staff use.

This finding reveals that the majority of school children do not have access to the vast information available from e-learning and information technology, which is speedily changing the process of education, especially in secondary schools. According to Haddad

and Drexler (2002), computer facilities provide access to worldwide information resources and it engages students in the learning process.

7.2.2.7   Perception of the Physical Quality of School Buildings

The majority of children indicated that the states of their schools are deplorable. Children talked about poorly constructed roofs and ceilings in their classrooms. As a result, of the bad roofs/ceilings, many children mentioned that when it rains, they often get wet and their classrooms tend to get very messy. Many children also indicated that they do not have enough chairs or desks. As put by Juliet in Group H, '*some of us do not have* [a] *desk. We have to place the books on our laps to write*'. Other children also mentioned that their teachers often dictate or write on the walls due to the lack of blackboards. Another major problem is that most of the classrooms do not have windows (see Picture 7.6) or doors and the schools do not have proper fences.

Picture 7.6: The Deplorable State of Classrooms Built Without Windows

In some schools, children indicated that the classrooms are often overcrowded (see Picture 7.7). As explained by Jones in Group F (JSS & SSS), '*the classrooms cannot accommodate us. Right now, we are using the church venue, but we have to vacate the rooms when the church needs them*'.

Picture 7.7:   Children in an Overcrowded Classroom in a Community Primary School

7.2.2.8   Perceptions on the Quality of Education Provided

The majority of children indicated that one significant problem affecting the quality of education was the high number of inadequate teachers in the schools. For instance, in Group C (JSS), children mentioned that they have only four teachers in a school with over 400 students. Worse still, children added that they do not have teachers for core subjects such as English Language and Mathematics. The significance of these core subjects is such that students are required to pass them at national exam levels as pre-requisites for tertiary school admissions in the Nigerian education system.

In Group F (both JSS and SSS), children also expressed similar concerns on problems of inadequate teachers. However, this group added that not only are there insufficient teachers, but the teachers are also not permanent. According to the children, some of their teachers are recent university graduates (Youth Corpers), who have been posted to work in rural areas as part of a compulsory one-year post-graduate programme in Nigeria. As such, these 'Youth Corpers' only spend a couple of months in the schools before leaving the communities. In Group H (both JSS & SSS), children also expressed concern that their schools lack social and recreational programmes such as sports, cultural shows and debate programmes that can help children improve their skills.

Having presented and discussed the information gathered at children's level, we now turn to consider the views of school representatives on access to education in the communities and the influence of oil exploration activities on children's education.

7.2.3   School Representatives: Perceptions and Findings

Overall, most of the school representatives[28] presented negative assessments of children's access to education in the communities. Figure 7.4 shows some of the factors identified by interviewees as problems perceived with children's access to education. Of all the factors highlighted, respondents indicated that given the pervasive poverty in the communities, school fees/levies and other sundry charges are the main deterrents to child education. This information corroborates the children's perceptions and information from previous studies such as the assertion by Edoho (2008) that the pervasive poverty in the Niger Delta region undermines parents' ability to provide education for their children.

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[28] As noted in Chapter Four, are participants selected from staff of the school board

Figure 7.4: Factors Affecting Children's Access to Education in the Selected Communities
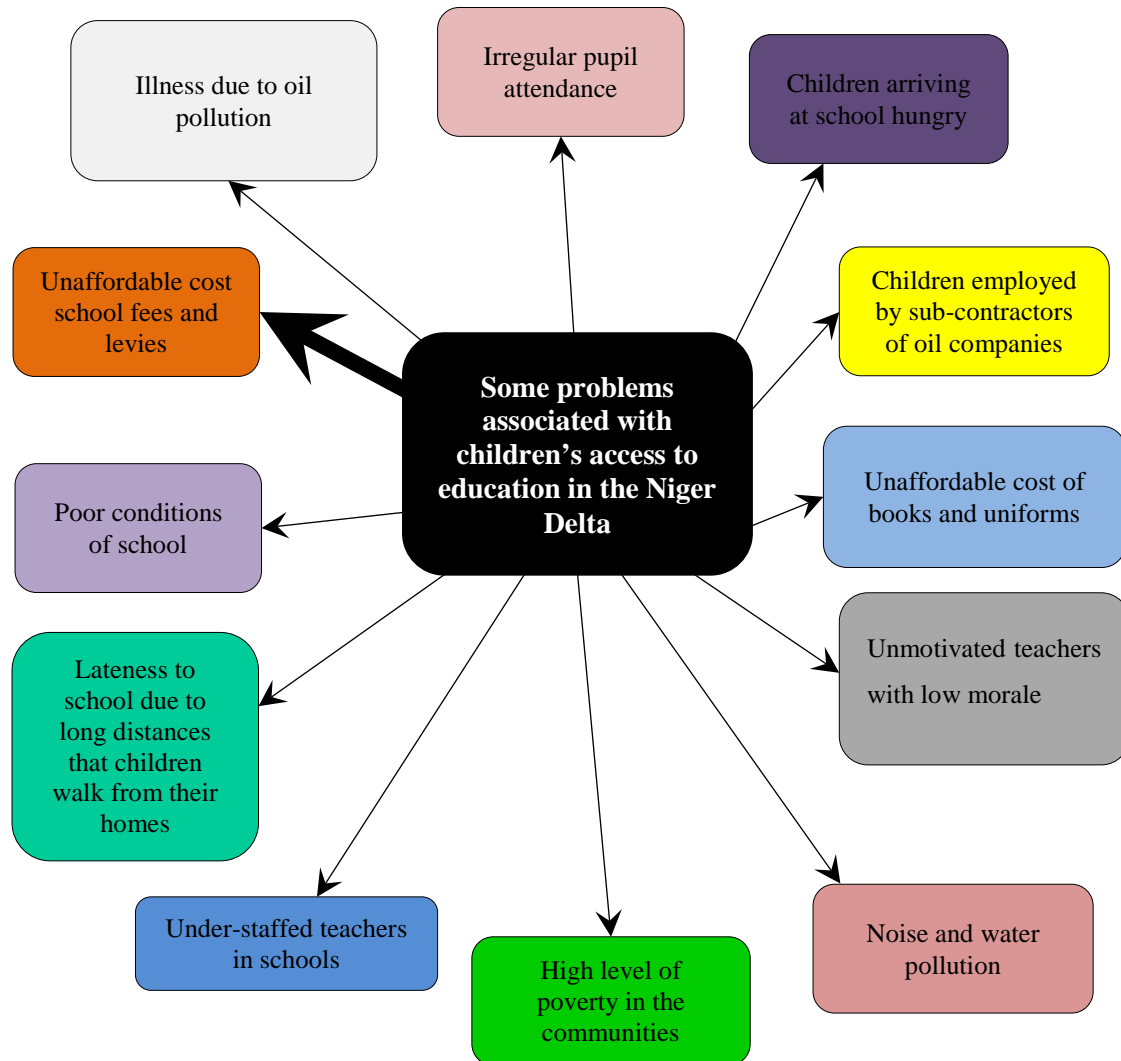
In this section, the presentation of findings will focus on some of the core issues highlighted by school representatives affecting children's access to education.

7.2.3.1 Problems Associated With School Fees/Levies

School representatives indicated that the cost of paying for education is usually unaffordable for the majority of the poor families in the region. As indicated by Interviewee number 9 (JSS & SSS, Bayelsa State) '*It would cost a child in secondary school about N60, 000.00 ($500) to be in school for one year. The child needs to pay for*

books, sandals, school uniforms, parent's teacher's association (P.T.A) fees, exam levies and other levies. A lot of parents cannot simple cope with all these cost [sic.], so *they train some children if possible and the others stay home'*.

School representatives also corroborate the information from children by indicating that the problems of school fees/levies cause children's irregular attendance and children dropping out from schools. Particularly, they mentioned that most children register and attend schools at the beginning of school terms, but towards the end of the term when exams start approaching, students who have not paid their school fees/exam levies do not attend.

Primary school representatives corroborated children's information that their pupils are not beneficiaries of oil company awards but of private individuals' and foreign donor's scholarship/bursary awards. However, secondary school representatives confirmed that children get scholarships/bursaries from oil companies and private individuals but not from the federal government or NDDC. The secondary school representatives also alleged that the beneficiaries of oil company awards are too few when compared to the number of poor children in the communities. As a result, the awards have often triggered community crises due to the large number of families wanting to claim them.

Another problem with the oil company awards is the process of selecting successful children. Respondents indicated that oil companies often hand out forms to chiefs and key community leaders to determine which children are eligible to compete for the scholarship awards. After the initial selection process by community leaders, children are then assessed through tests or exams in their schools for the final selection of successful beneficiaries. Apart from the complex process, the oil company awards are also based on academic performance. Thus, oil company scholarships are only open to children who have successfully completed the first year of their junior secondary schools (JSS1). This means that children are selected in the second year of the junior secondary schools (JSS2) to compete for scholarship/bursary awards. The problem with this structure as observed is that it automatically excludes children who are not attending school or have dropped out of school as a result of lack of funds.

7.2.3.2   Problems Associated With Distance, Work Activities and Hungry Children

Poor access to transportation causes children to trek long distances to school and this results in exhaustion and distraction from school activities. As indicated by interviewee number 7 (Senior Secondary School):

> *Some students walk long distances from their homes to get to school. For instance, they have to leave their homes by 7am to get here to school by 8 or 9am. As a matter of fact students trek for one or two hours to arrive at school, which is not supposed to be so. In most cases they don't come to school the next day. All these affects the learning processes of children. I do not blame them since some come from across the river and this is hectic for children.*

School representatives also mention that in some cases, children's irregular attendance is highly correlated with child labour. Respondents indicated that some children have to work on farms for very long hours before coming to school, while in other cases, children are single parents or orphans have to work and attend school at the same time and these activities affects children's education. School representatives also added that children often arrive at schools very hungry and too weak to concentrate on school activities. As one interviewee puts it '*children always complain of hunger. We have lots of students who don't eat before they come to school*'. Respondents linked this problem of hungry children to the general problems posed by the negative impacts of oil exploration activities on parents'/carers' livelihoods. According to a UNICEF report, hunger and chronic malnutrition reduces the learning attainments of children attending school (UNICEF, 2011c).

7.2.3.3   Problems Associated With Poor Quality of Education

Class-size, which in this case represents the number of students per classroom shows that in one of the primary schools, there were approximately 1,200 students sharing 12 classrooms. This denotes an average class size of 100 students in each classroom. In another school (both JSS and SSS), there were 4 classrooms for 500 pupils, which translate to 125 students in a classroom. It is also important to note that these classroom spaces are of standard measurements that are designed to accommodate between 35-40 pupils. According to respondents, the problem of overcrowded classrooms and inadequate

educational resources further exacerbate the problems associated with the quality of education in schools.

Teacher-pupil ratios were also noted to vary. For instance, the primary school with 1200 students had 19 teachers, which translates as a teacher-student ratio of 60-1. In another primary school with 500 pupils and 19 teachers the student-teacher ratio is 26-1. Despite the variety of results, there is a broad consensus by all respondents that the majority of the schools are in need of more teachers. School representatives also mentioned that the information on the numbers of teachers is not an absolute figure due to teacher's irregular attendance.

To shed light on the problems of staffing and the inadequate numbers of qualified teachers, the school representatives explained that, many teachers reject postings to rural areas due to the poor facilities available. Consequently, schools lacking adequate teachers rely on makeshift arrangements. One of these makeshift arrangements is the practice of having irregular and different young university graduates ('Youth Corpers') who have been posted to rural communities. According to respondents, other than irregular staffing, the 'Youth Corpers' are unqualified since they are not trained as teachers. By adopting a makeshift process, the 'Youth Corpers' are asked to teach subjects that are related or not related to their qualifications. For instance, an English 'Youth Corper' graduate may be asked to teach Literature or Agricultural science. As put by interviewee number 7 from a senior secondary school in Okpai Oluchi community, Delta State:

> *'The current teacher English Language teacher is a 'Youth Corper' who studied International relations at a BSc level, so he is not qualified to teach English Language. In this school, there are about 120 students and we have only 6 teachers. Even the six teachers are not regular staff. We only have four qualified teachers for Physics, geography, Christian religious knowledge (CRS) and Agricultural science. All others are on makeshift arrangements. Somebody who has done a related course is asked to teach to help us carry the students along. The problem of staffing is because many teachers are not interested in living in the rural area due to the poor social amenities'.*

School representatives also expressed that morale amongst teachers is poor; this is driven by poor remuneration and the poor transportation system for teachers in rural areas. In

particular, teachers talked about earning poor salaries when compared to civil servants and the high cost of living in rural areas drains most of their salaries. As expressed by interviewee number 11 (JSS & SSS representative) *'a teacher who wants to photocopy a document that should ordinarily cost N5 in the community, will have to travel to Kwale (town) and pay as much as N600 or N1000 for the same document due to poor facilities in the community.* Respondents also indicated that the poor transportation system in the communities is another reason for the poor quality of education. As put by the school representative:

> *'There are no basic amenities like transportation which means it is difficult for teachers to live here. The available transportation within communities is very expensive. The poor and costly transportation system forces me to come to the school on Monday and go back on Fridays with all my foodstuffs bought from Kwale town. The reason I can do this is because I have a car. But most teachers cannot do that because they do not own cars and the only means of transportation are the commercial motorbikes (Okada), which charge exorbitant prices. Many teachers trek. No taxis. The community does not have any health facilities, so if a teacher gets sick, he may die before he gets to the town in Kwale for treatment.*

These findings tend to suggest that beyond the crisis that has bedevilled Nigeria's educational scheme, the problems of poor socio-economic facilities in the rural areas further exacerbates children's poor access to education.

7.2.3.4 Problems Associated With Oil Exploration Activities

School representatives also illuminated the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's access to education in the communities. While discussing problems of school fees/levies, all respondents had indicated that the negative impact of oil and gas exploration activities has resulted in pervasive poverty which no doubt stoked up the problems of children's access to proper education. According to school representatives, children are vulnerable to oil pollution mainly because there are numerous cases of children who have fallen sick from drinking polluted water or eating polluted crops and could not continue with their education. Respondents also indicate that students often complain about the impacts of gas flares on their eyes and the disturbance from the noise pollution in their classrooms. Respondents from Bayelsa State in particular claimed that

noise pollution from oil exploration sites close to the schools distracts children's concentration and learning processes. They also indicated that the deplorable state of the schools with no windows, fences, or proper roofing worsens the discomfort generated by the noise pollution.

Respondents added that given the state of poverty in the communities, children (supported by their parents) tend to be in constant search of casual jobs offered by sub-contractors of oil companies where they can gain easy financial rewards. These casual jobs often pay more than the teachers earn as salary and this makes children misbehave in classrooms. As narrated by interviewee number 6 (Senior Secondary School representative):

> *'The most important issue affecting students are* [sic.] *the ways to make quick money. It affects their education because they no longer listen to the right type of learning. Teachers even struggle to control them in classrooms since they believe that even if they do not go to school, they will make money better than you the teacher'.*

School representatives also indicated that children often drop out of school once they have access to these casual jobs because there is a general assumption by the locals that the whole essence of formal education is to get a job. Thus, children who get construction jobs in oil construction sites drop out of school upon getting these jobs.

7.2.3.5   Perception of School Buildings

The majority of the interviewees indicated that the schools were in bad condition; classrooms were overcrowded with no blackboards. As put by one school representative:

> *'This school has been in existence for over 30 years. The classrooms are not enough. We have too many students. Sometimes students are sent back home because there are no classrooms to accommodate them. The school is supposed to be the life wire of the community so the federal government should take it seriously'.*

Another interviewee (number 3) added that '*If you come here during the raining season, you will feel sorry for the children. The classrooms have no proper roofing and the windows are in deplorable states. Children are often wet when it rains*'.

Many school representatives also indicated that the quality of rural school buildings in the NDR requires a process of rapid rehabilitation.

7.2.3.6 Access to Facilities in the School Environments

The vast majority of respondents affirmed that no source of water is available for children in the school compounds. Although, some respondents indicated that the schools have wells, they were quick to add that the water from the well is unhygienic. The well is described as a 'naked' well, exposed to pollution such as gas flares and deemed unsuitable for consumption. Perhaps more importantly, despite the fact that children who drink from the well tends to get sick, most children have little alternatives and thus continue to drink from these polluted wells.

It was also observed that none of the schools visited were designed with any functional toilet facility. Respondents explained that most schools in the rural areas are not generally built with toilet facilities. Although some schools have pit toilets, however, due to poor access to water facilities in the schools, the pit toilet systems are often in a deplorable state and not functional.

The respondents also added that children in schools do not have access to library facilities, which can improve their advancement of knowledge and general quality of life. In schools where libraries exist, they are more or less designated spaces with few out-dated books. As interviewee number 2 stated, '*for a school with a capacity of 500 pupils, just about 8 to 10 children can use the few books in the library*'.

Referring to provisions for science laboratories, the majority of the schools representatives indicated that the many schools do not have science laboratories. However, some respondents mentioned that few schools have standard science laboratories, which were built and equipped by oil companies. In many other schools, the science laboratories that exist are more cosmetic than functional mainly as the quality does not meet standard requirements. Respondents believe that within the rural communities, the poor

performance of children in science subjects can be partially related to children's poor access to standard and functional science laboratories.

It was also mentioned that most children do not have access to computer facilities in school environments. In rare cases where schools have computers, they are either limited to staff use or the computers are not functional due to lack of electricity supply. On access to an electricity supply in schools, it was noted that many school do not have access to electricity supply. Although, some representatives indicated that their schools are run on electrical generators, however it was observed that schools that run on generators often face problems of associated with lack of fuel/diesel needed to power the electric generators.

From the foregoing, it is without doubt that while oil exploration factors have affected children's access to education and child education faces significant challenges despite the community's contribution to the national oil wealth. The next section will present perceptions of parents/carers on children's access to education in the communities.

7.2.4   Parents/Carers: Perceptions and Findings:

During the FGDs, parents and carers across the communities mentioned that some of their children attend schools while other children do not. When asked to describe the major problem with children's access to education, they all indicated that the school fees/levies and other school-associated costs are the major impediments to child education. As coping strategies to tackle the high cost of school fees/levies, participants adopt varies strategies which all have negative impacts on child education. In some cases, the majority of parents/carers who have children attending schools sometimes withdraw their children from schools during exam periods because they could not afford the exam levies. In other cases, some parents pay the exam levies but do not provide books or sandals for children. As one father puts it '*I have six children, some of my children do not go to school with sandals or books because I can't afford them*'. It was also noted that some parents adopt the strategy of making a choice on which child to send to school and which child stays at home to concentrate on the family/other business. Interestingly this choice is not often gender based as parents mentioned that they sometimes send younger children to school while older children are encouraged to source for jobs to support the family.

For most parents, the negative impacts of oil exploration activities on their livelihoods, reduces their income and this affects their ability to pay exam levies or provide other

school requirements for their children. Participants also added that due to the health impacts of oil exploration activities on their children, a significant proportion of their income is spent on taking children to the chemists and buying medicines rather than investing in their education. Participants also mentioned that none of their children are beneficiaries of the scholarship programmes. They expressed their disappointments with the limited number of beneficiaries awarded oil companies' scholarships, which tends to exclude the majority of the poor families in the communities.

Additionally, the process of awarding these scholarships, which is done through community leaders was said to be a major problem as only families related to these community leaders are included. There was certainly a feeling amongst parents that where scholarship/bursary awards exist, the children of the chiefs are the only beneficiaries. In Group F, (Bodo community, Rivers State), a parent expressed her perceptions on scholarships by saying '*we only hear of scholarships, but our children are not beneficiaries. You can ask the chiefs; we don't know anything about scholarships*'. Participants also noted that families tend to squabble over these limited awards, which often creates local crisis. More so, the exclusions of primary school children from these scholarship awards were considered a disadvantage to children.

The problems of the oil company scholarship programmes were well captured by a parent in Group A (Beneku community, Delta State), who stated that:

> *Oil companies do not award scholarship to our primary school children. For the secondary school, what happens is that the oil companies give the whole of our community only four scholarships, bearing in mind that this community has two quarters with thousands of people. In our quarter, which is the first quarter, the chiefs just share it [scholarship forms] at the elder's table. While in my house alone, I have four children. Some have two, six, and even more. So this brings problems within families. You see 20 families fighting for one scholarship.*

Overall, Participants also expressed a wish to have the federal government exempt children from oil producing communities from paying the exam fees and provide a completely free educational system - including free books for children up to university level - as part of the oil benefits for children.

7.2.5   Community Leaders: Perceptions and Findings

All community leaders indicated that their children of school ages were attending schools. Nonetheless, the high cost of school fees/levies was mentioned as a major deterrent to child education in the communities. The community leaders agreed that oil exploration activities have significant negative impacts on children's access to education. The major issues expressed were noise pollution and the health problems caused oil exploration activities. For instance, the community leaders in Bayelsa State mention that some schoolteachers have constantly complained about the loud noises from gas flaring activities, which affects child education. They also mentioned that when children get ill from oil pollution, they were often unable to continue with their education due to the poor hospital facilities in the communities. More so, parent's minimal income is also exhausted on medicines to help their sick children get well.

It was mentioned that when families lose their livelihoods from oil pollution, child education is affected since they are not often able to pay for the school requirements. As stated by interviewee number 13, Oporoza, Delta State, '*when people lose their farmlands, they become unemployed. In this community, the rate of unemployment is very high. This makes it very difficult for parents to pay for school fees, buy books and provide uniforms for their children*'. Several of the respondents also agreed that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with the number of scholarships/bursaries being provided in the communities as the following responses indicate.

> '*Scholarships are provided by the oil company but they are too very few* [sic.]. *Just about 3 for the entire community, this cannot help children go to school. Parents cannot take care of their children. It is the duty of the oil companies to do that*' (Interviewee number 7, Ogbolomia, Bayelsa State)

> '*The oil company gives two scholarships in each community. But the community has up to 500 people, how can two scholarships make any difference. Moreover, there are more people who cannot train their children. In those days, oil companies gave about 18 people scholarships but that number has reduced today*' (Interviewee 11, Okpai-Oluchi, Delta State).

Of critical importance is the assertion by leaders that the support given by the federal government and state agencies has been both minimal and inadequate. For instance, in

Bodo community (Rivers State), respondents reported that the primary school constructed by the NCCD was poorly carried out. There is also a general feeling amongst interviewees that the NDDC is a corrupt organisation initiated to represent the federal government rather than the local people's desires. As interviewee number 6, (Imiringi, Bayelsa State) puts it; *'there is no presence of NDDC in the community. These organisations* [OMPADEC and NDDC] *are big thieves helping government to siphon monies. They cannot create the basic amenities like proper schools for children to make life meaningful'.*

Overall, respondents believe the oil companies should be fully responsible for child education in the communities mainly as the local people have not benefitted from the oil wealth. Having illuminated perceptions at the community level, we now present the findings from interviews with oil company representatives.

7.2.6   Oil company representatives: Perceptions and Findings

Oil company representatives indicated that child education programmes such as building of schools and awarding of scholarships/bursaries in host communities are one of the programmes specifically targeted at children. When asked why oil companies do not offer scholarships to primary school children, a Shell representative explained that *'our scholarship schemes are only targeted at Secondary and Tertiary institutions in order to enhance skilled manpower and scholastic achievement in the region'.* The Chevron representative also corroborated this information by stating that *'we give thousands of scholarships, about 2,500 annually, to Secondary and Tertiary institutions, but we do not target primary schools'.*

With the pervasive poverty in the Niger Delta region, this concentration on secondary and tertiary schools, however tends to overlook the importance of primary education in a child's life. As noted in Chapter Two, a child's basic primary education is a fundamental tool "known to be an effective weapon against child poverty" (UNICEF, 2011c:4). To substantiate the importance of the primary educational level, which evolves over a six year period in the Nigerian 6-3-3-4 educational system, Durosaro (2004) asserts that primary education is aimed at children's development of 'basic literacy, numeracy, communication skills and transmission of the culture of the people to younger generations'. Considering this, the policy of awarding scholarships to secondary and tertiary institutions inevitably de-emphasises the importance of primary education in the region.

Oil company representatives also mentioned that the scholarship/bursary awards are usually based on an aptitude test, merits or academic performance. In effect, this structure not only excludes primary school children but also excludes poor children who have never been to school or who have dropped out of school as a result of financial difficulties or other reasons. According to UNICEF (2011c), 'severe education deprivation' describes children aged between 7 and 17 who had never been to school and were not currently attending school (e.g. no professional education of any kind). Drawing from these accounts, it can be argued that the agenda process of awarding scholarships to children already in their secondary schools is not targeted at educationally deprived children. Besides, based on findings at the children and community levels that the main impediment to education is the high cost of school fees/levies and other school associated costs, the scholarship scheme does not take into consideration children who are facing these challenges in the communities.

Additionally, it was mentioned that oil companies adopt a corporate-community relation's pattern whereby selected community representatives are charged with the responsibility of distributing scholarship/bursary forms to qualifying applicants. Findings from children indicate that this centralised pattern places community leaders in charge and reduces the effectiveness of the programmes mainly as the limited forms are often distributed amongst friends and families of the community leaders themselves. As a result, there is an inherent consensus amongst most children and parents/carers that the scholarship/bursary programme is an initiative set up by oil companies for children of selected community leaders and not for the benefit of the general community.

The number of scholarship/bursary award beneficiaries by oil companies is also based on the annual oil production figures in the host communities. As put by a Chevron Oil Company representative, '*the decision is driven by a combination of factors including available budget, size of Regional Development Committee (RDCs) and our level of operation in a particular area*'. Although, the funds allocated to the scholarship/bursary programmes have demonstrated the aims of oil companies to significantly enhance children's access to education and academic excellence in their host communities, majority of the children, perceive the beneficiaries of this award as too few, forcing many families to struggle.

The next section will present information elicited from the NDAF (NGO) on child access to education in the NDR.

7.2.7 Niger Delta Academic Foundation Representative (NDAF): Perceptions and Findings

The NDAF is designed with the aim of providing an enabling environment for education in line with the visions of the MDGs. A representative of the NGO indicated that about 40% of the children in the Niger Delta region are educationally deprived. According to the representative, while the nation has recognised children's right to education, this was more on paper than in reality. To explicate this, the representative noted that achieving children's right to education is problematic due to the nation's socio-economic problems and corrupt practices in implementing the CRA initiative. Furthermore, the negative impacts of oil explorations in the region have increased poverty, which has exacerbated the problems of educational attainments in the region.

Nonetheless, the representative is of the view that the federal government has shown more attention than the oil companies in areas of children's education and health. This was deduced from the NGO's partnership with the community and rural development department in the NDDC master plan to build schools and provide an enabling environment for access to education in the region. However, it should be pointed out that the NGO is not specifically focused on child education but on wider community in the region. For instance, the NGO's partnership with the federal government agency (NDDC) is focused on university education, rather than primary or secondary education.

With regards to the oil companies' support for education, the representative suggested that the scholarship support scheme by oil companies is more of a 'divide and rule' strategy particularly as the poorly-structured scholarship allocations by oil companies have often resulted in communal crises. The representative also noted that, despite some developmental projects such as school buildings, the majority of children are impoverished and children in general have not benefitted from the oil wealth.

7.2.8 Overview

The primary challenge to child education in Nigeria is the poor state of socio-economic development in the nation and the nature of the development policies that have given rise

to these circumstances (Tojunde and Carter, 2007; UNICEF, 2011c). Results in this study also reveal that the UBE, which is a laudable initiative by the federal government to provide free and basic education, is not free in its entirety mainly as school fees/levies and other sundry charges limits children's access to education especially in rural areas. However, these challenges are worsened by the potentially adverse impacts of oil exploration activities, such as the loss of income from the destruction of livelihoods and health problems that children face in the Niger Delta region.

In particular, many children mentioned that a major factor that deters their access to education is the problem of school fees/levies. This was supported at the community level by parents/carers who claimed that the inability to cope with school fees/levies and other associated school requirements is related to the damages caused by oil exploration activities on family livelihoods. This implies that when oil pollution affects livelihoods, income and resources that would otherwise have been available for children's school fees/levies are used for sustenance. These findings are also consistent with several reports in which the extensive damage to local people's livelihoods as a result of oil exploration activities is linked to a decline in family income (HRW, 1999/2002; Amnesty International, 2009).

Additionally, due to the pervasive poverty in the communities, some children search for construction jobs with sub-contractors of oil companies in order to support themselves and their families. This has an effect on child education mainly as children often drop out of school upon getting these jobs. Noise pollution from oil construction sites was also mentioned as a problem, affecting children's hearing and learning processes in schools. As coping strategies, parents/cares have adopted some approaches that can harm children's wellbeing. For instance, results show that the cost of exam fees/levies forces parents to choose amongst their children who to register in schools. Thus, some children in the communities have never been to school. In other cases, parents register their children only to withdraw them during exam assessments. This is because children are allowed to enrol without paying school fees or exam levies at the beginning of term, but must pay the outstanding bills before they can sit for their exams. This information sheds some light on the increase number of school enrolment as noted in Chapter Three. Further, in some instances, children's school fees are paid, but they are sent to school without shoes and books in order to deal with the cost of child education.

Oil company representatives also pointed out that, as part of their CSR programmes, they provide scholarship/bursary award programmes to children in host communities. However, it was somewhat surprising that oil companies only provide scholarships for secondary and tertiary education. This structure, automatically excludes primary school children, including children who have dropped out of school and children who have never attended school. In addition, the scholarship process also excludes the category of 'Severe Educational Deprivation', which includes children aged between 7 and 17 who had never been to school and were not currently attending school (e.g. no professional education of any kind). According to children and participants at the community level, not only are the scholarship provisions too few to accommodate the numbers of 'poor' children but the process of awarding scholarships tends to suggest that it is only beneficial to selected children and relatives of the community leaders who are in charge of distributing the forms.

Other than the oil company efforts, the representative of the federal government development agency (NDDC) also indicated that they engage in the building of primary schools and provision of classroom blocks in the Niger Delta region. Despite these indications, children revealed that the efforts of the NDDC may not have achieved its desired objectives mainly as their classrooms are often overcrowded with poor teaching facilities such as tables, chairs, blackboards, libraries, etc. Other problems associated with child education relates to the long hours children walk from their homes to school as a result of the poor transportation system in the communities.

Overall, the quality of education and facilities in school environments were shown to be poor, mainly as schools do not have provision for a favourable learning environment. For instance, in many school environments, children did not have access to clean water. This finding was unexpected considering that during in-depth interviews, the oil company and NDDC representatives indicated that the school building projects were the major developmental target aimed at children. Based on this, it can be argued that the majority of the school building projects were not designed with children's basic needs or children's voices in the design plan. Worse still, schools have problems of understaffing and unmotivated teachers, which are related to low remuneration for teachers in rural communities and the lack of basic amenities in these communities. With access to child education characterised by the high cost of school fees and few children on scholarship

awards, there is no doubt that educational achievement, which is a fundamental child right and could address child poverty is poorly co-ordinated by the federal government.

The next section will present findings on children's work activities and how oil exploration impacts on these activities.

7.3   Child Work

Findings and discussions on children's work activities will be presented from five groups of participants; children (children's level), parents/carers (community level), community leaders (community level), school representatives (community level) and a Chevron Oil Company representative (national level). In this section, children's work activities will be related to household chores and economic activities. The objective of this section is to present information regarding the various types of work activities that children engage in to support their families and to present participants' perceptions of the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's work activities.

7.3.1   Children: Perceptions and Findings

Children engage in household chores such as cleaning, cooking, babysitting, fetching water and firewood irrespective of their ages or gender. Figure 7.11[29] shows children main activities, such as trading, fishing and farming and household chores. As Figure 7.11(a) reveals, a small percentage of children's (6%) main activities are the household chores. These groups of children explained that they look after the younger ones at home after they return from schools, while their siblings and parents go to farms and engage in other activities.

Nonetheless, care is required in interpreting the results from Figure 7.11 mainly as some children are also involved in minor activities that generate income. As explained by 15-year-old boy from Bodo Community (Rivers State), while his major economic activities are fishing and farming, he is also a part-time labourer on a construction site. In Ogbolomai community (Bayelsa State), 16-year-old Jennifer added that apart from her major economic activity, which is selling or trading in the market, she also earns some income from hair plaiting and selling mobile phone recharge cards.

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[29] All figures in percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number for discussion purposes

Figure 7.5: Types of Children's Work Activities
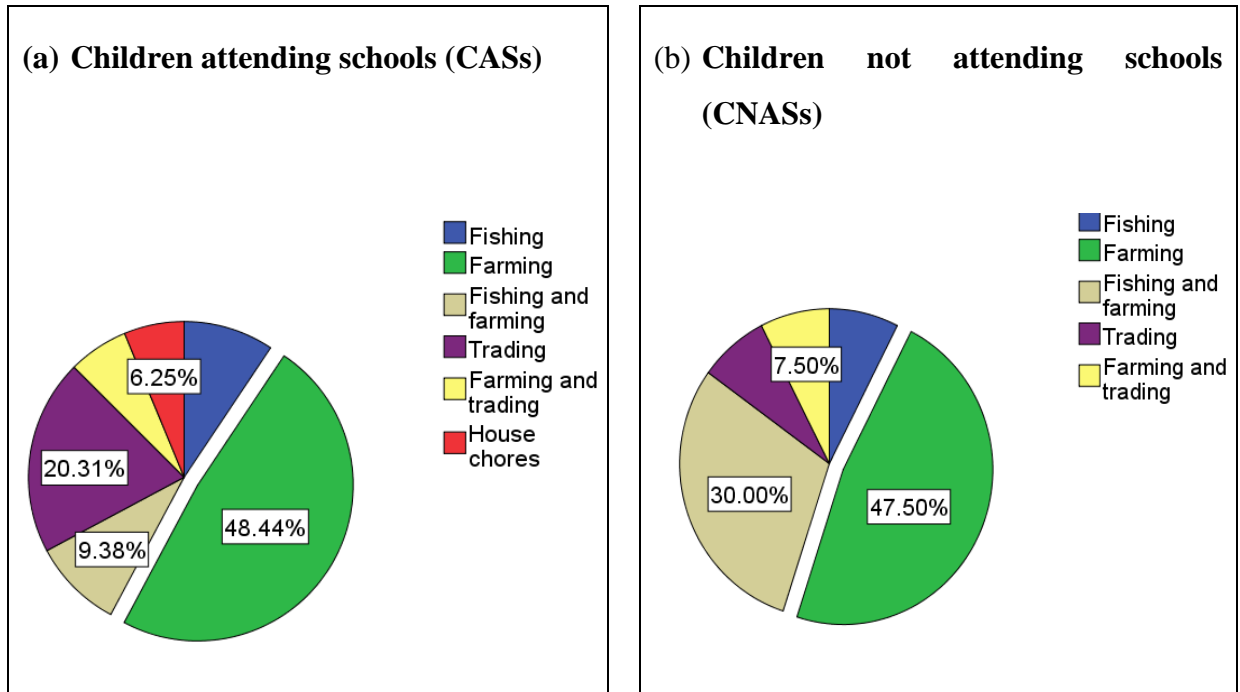
Results also revealed some fundamental differences regarding the time of the day in which these major activities are performed. For instance, the CNASs engage in their major activities beginning in the mornings, while all the CASs revealed that their major activities are carried out after school hours. Although these activities have had positive impacts on their family's resources, the common practice of combining work and school by the CASs often has negative consequences on their educational progress. As mentioned by school representatives, children's irregular attendance at school is strongly related to the children's 'work'.

The number of hours that children work also varies, as the CNASs work for longer hours (between 8-11 hours daily) than the CASs (between 5-6 hours daily). In a study by Joseph-Obi (2011) on child labour in the Rivers State, he argued that children are victims of agricultural child labour working for very long hours (between 9 and 11 hours per day). Furthermore, he argued that children are forced to undertake tasks that are completely inappropriate for their ages and physical strength. Nyenke (2004) also noted that agricultural labourers prefer to hire children because agricultural labour requires long hours and children are cheaper to hire than adults.

While discussing the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's work activities, children affirmed that the adverse impacts of oil exploration have reduced their family's

income and productivity from their agricultural activities. Consequently, they work in difficult environments such as construction sites, which provide better income to support their families. Drawing in this finding, children's work activities tend to be important, especially in poor households. Thus, the CRA principle that child work contravenes children's rights should be concerned with the conditions of child work and the role of government in providing an enabling environment that protects family livelihoods. As noted in Chapter Two, several authors argue that the more vulnerable a family is, the more limited their choices are to overcome their adversities; hence, the children are inevitably sent to work (Bonnet, 1993; Tojunde and Carter, 2007; Okafor, 2010).

7.3.2 Parents/carers: Perceptions and Findings

At the community level, parents/carers indicated that the destruction of livelihoods by oil exploration activities have forced many children to work to support their families. The majority of the parents/carers also added that their children have to do menial jobs and struggle to take care of themselves since they as parents have lost the ability to do so. As indicated by a parent from Imiringi Community

> *'Families are suffering; most families depend on their children to support the family. The level of poverty in the community is killing us. The federal government and the oil companies are not helping to provide jobs for our children. Most parents encourage their children to engage in activities that will bring money'.*

One of the salient issues that emerged from the FGD with parents is the need for oil companies to provide jobs for their children. The information from parents/carers tends to suggest that parents encourage their children to search for jobs with sub-contractors of oil companies as indicated by school representatives in earlier discussions.

7.3.3 Community Leaders: Perceptions and Findings

All community leaders corroborated information by parents/carers by indicating that, due to the deepening poverty and poor socio-economic development in the communities, many children work to provide income to support themselves and their family.

7.3.4 School Representatives: Perceptions and Findings

School representatives[30] explained that sub-contractors of oil companies often hire some children as labourers in their construction sites. School representatives also believe that the income generated by children does not necessarily improve their access to education but rather children often drop out from schools when they get these seasonal jobs. A possible explanation for children dropping out of schools after getting these jobs was that these jobs tend to provide high wages and parents encourage their children to search for more constructions jobs and abandon their education. Another explanation is that the jobs are tedious and children cannot cope with the combination of construction work and schoolwork.

7.3.5 Overview

Results show that there is a strong relationship between oil exploration activities and child work/labour. Many children explained that the more oil pollution destroys family livelihoods, the more they have to work to earn income to support their families. Thus, the destruction of their livelihoods by oil pollution does not only result in family poverty but also tend to expose children to child labour. Furthermore, results show that a child's educational status can influence the time and number of hours they work as children not attending tends to work for longer hours.

Drawing on the relationship between child work and education, the study demonstrates that some types of children's work activities can have negative effects on their studies. For example, school representatives talked about children taking up a range of work activities such as working in construction sites, to support family income. However, some of these activities can make children fatigued and can lead to children dropping out from schools. It is important to add that while some children talked about working in constructions sites owned by sub-contractors of oil companies, responses from oil company participants refuted this claim. For instance, a Chevron oil company representative indicated that they do not employ children as part of company regulations and all their contractors adheres strictly to this policy.

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[30] As noted in Chapter Four, are participants selected from staff of the school board

7.4 Play Spaces

This section presents perceptions on children's play spaces in the communities. It also presents findings related to the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's play spaces by children (children level) and parents/carers (community level).

7.4.1 Children: Perceptions and Findings

Child play is an integral aspect of children's lives in the Niger Delta region. Children highlighted some outdoor games such as swimming, football, cricket and table tennis, while some indoor games listed were ludo, clapping games and Chess. The main activity engaged in by children was swimming. However, oil pollution resulting from oil exploration activities often forces them to abandon their swimming activities in affected streams or rivers. Incidents of oil pollution on rivers/streams can also disrupt play areas surrounding the streams/rivers, which are key sites for social interaction in the communities. For instance, children explained that swimming embodies play, leisure and culture because the rivers and/or streams are a shared space for children to meet, swim together and interact with other children and adults. During several discussions, children boasted about their natural swimming and fish catching skills and also enjoyed talking about diving competitions amongst themselves.

Specifically, children in Ogoniland (Rivers State) indicated that they have to avoid play areas close to erupted oil pipelines from oil spill incidents. There was also a considerable emphasis that fire often breaks out in the event of oil spills (see Figure 7.8) amongst the Ogoniland communities. Another major activity that children enjoy is football; however, this was a gender-based activity as the majority of those who enjoyed it were boys. In the event of oil spills, children simply avoid areas that are close to their playing fields, however, in noise-polluted areas, such as the study communities in Bayelsa State, children explained that they have grown accustomed to the noise and simply carry on with their football activities.

Children were asked to discuss the means or methods by which information on hazardous spaces are disseminated within the communities (see Appendix B1 and B2). The majority of children in all communities explained that in cases of oil spills they are informed by their parents or relatives. Children in focus group discussion A (JSS & SSS, Gbarantoru, Bayelsa State) added that the oil companies sometimes put a warning sign informing

people not to go near gas flame sites. Children in Group C (JSS, Kpean, Rivers State), mentioned that a designated member of the community is often sent by the community leaders to the oil pollution and to warn people to avoid such dangerous areas. As put by an 11 year old, '*the king sends a town crier to announce that there has been an oil spill. People should not go around that particular area and should not eat from polluted farms or drink from polluted streams'*.

Picture 7.8: Fire from an Oil Spill Site in B-Dere community, Ogoni Rivers State

7.4.2   Parents/Carers: Perceptions and Findings

Although parents/carers admitted that all children had some time to play with their friends, the majority of the participants did not seem to consider children's play spaces as pertinent to improving children's quality of life. Parents mentioned that the issue of play is not as significant as the destruction of livelihoods, which children need to survive. These findings support arguments that children's play is often taken for granted and viewed as an unaffordable luxury, especially in poor communities (Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Gleave, 2009).

7.4.3   Overview

The results obtained in this study, reveals that oil exploration activities impact negatively on children's access to play spaces. Remarkably, of all the play activities, every child from

the study communities pointed out that they loved swimming. A possible reason for this can be explained in part by the rivers, streams and creeks, which crisscross the region and local swimming activities. Parents/carers however do not perceive discussions on children's play activities as imperative considering the pervasive poverty in the region. Nonetheless, there is need for the federal government, the oil companies and developmental agencies to facilitate environmentally safe play spaces with respect to the CRA provisions and oil exploration regulations. Attempts to promote children's safe play spaces should also integrate children's voices in its design and decision-making processes. As shown in this study, children are competent enough to talk about their play spaces and recreational activities. In addition, children were able to explain the harmful influences of oil exploration activities on their play spaces.

7.5   Suggestions on Improving the Lives of Children in the Community

Given the multifaceted negative impacts of oil exploration activities identified by participants at the children and community levels, participants were asked to proffer suggestions that could help improve the children's lives in the communities. The next sections will present suggestions by children (children's level), parents/carers (community level) and community leaders (community level).

7.5.1   Children: Suggestions

Across the communities, there were similarities in children's suggestions, such as access to clean water, electricity, a completely free educational system, healthy food, healthcare services, etc. Figure 7.6, presents the 11 major suggestions by children that can improve the quality of their lives. As shown in Figure 7.6, '*complete free education*' (shaded with the thickest arrow) ranked the highest suggestion, followed by '*scholarship for children*' (shaded with the thicker arrow) ranked number 2, while '*reduce or eliminate oil exploration problems*' ranked number 3 (shaded with the thick arrow). In the following discussion, all 11 suggestions will be numbered and discussed in ascending order with the highest suggestion ranking as number 1 and the lowest as number 11.

Figure 7.6: Suggestions – Children's Level
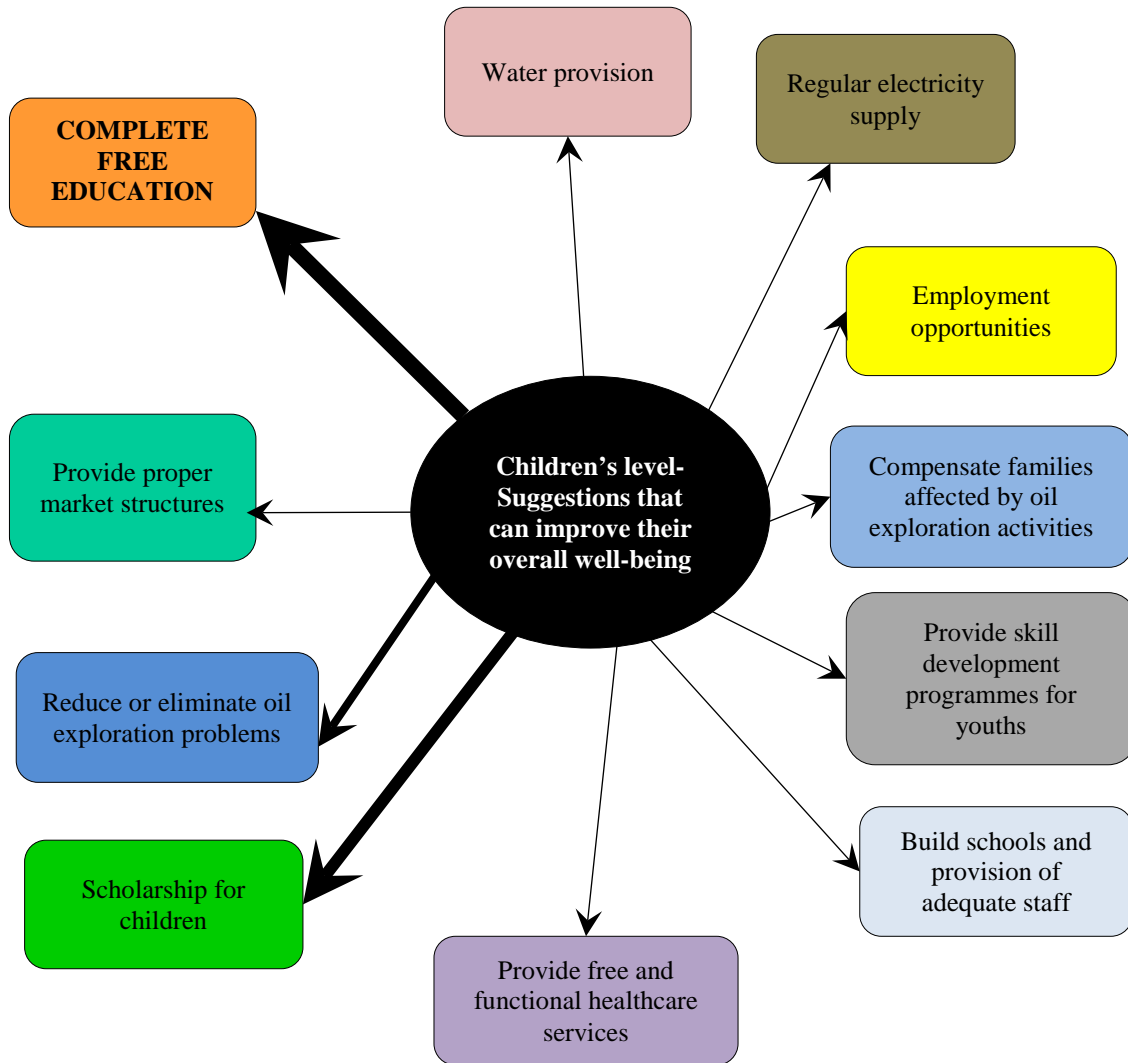
(1) Complete Free Education: The majority of the children, across the study communities suggested that oil companies and the federal government provide a complete free education. By free education, children explained that, it should include the cost of school fees/levies, and other school requirements such as books and uniforms. Most of the participants believe that based on the oil wealth from the resources in the region, a 'completely' free educational system is achievable.

(2)   Scholarship for Children: Children felt that the available of scholarship awards are too few to provide for the number of children whose families are affected by the

pollution from oil exploration activities. Considering this, many children suggested adequate and substantial provision of scholarship and bursary awards to children to help offset the cost of school fees/levies.

(3)   Reduce or Eliminate Oil Exploration Problems: Many children also suggested that oil companies and the federal government should endeavour to reduce or completely eliminate environmental exploration problems associated with oil processes. Children expressed that if the destruction caused by oil processes in the communities are controlled or completely expunged, the lives of children in the region will significantly improve.

(4)   Build Schools and Provision of adequate Staff: Another area that was mentioned was the need for construction of schools in the community with adequate facilities such as toilets and access to clean water. Children also suggested an improved remuneration package for teachers to motivate teachers who have difficulties taking jobs in rural communities.

(5)   Provide Free and Functional Healthcare Services: The provision of accessible and functional healthcare services, with adequate staff were also suggested as a major area that is lacking in the communities. Many children also advocated for free healthcare services as a fundamental right of people living in oil producing communities.

(6)   Compensate Families affected by Oil Exploration Activities: Children also said that an appropriate means whereby families whose farms/ponds are affected by oil exploration processes are adequately compensated by oil companies and the federal government.

(7)   Water Provision: Several children also cited the lack of water as a major setback in the communities. Considering this, accessible and availability of adequate water sources for domestic and personal uses were cited as suggestions that can improve their lives.

(8)   Regular Electricity Supply: Children also suggested that the federal government and the oil companies should provide functional and sustainable electricity supply in their communities. According to children, this will address a lot of infrastructural development problems and health problems, which will positively enhance their lives in the communities.

(9) **Provide Skill Development Programmes for Youths**: The introduction of skill development programmes was suggested to empower and ensure that the 'youths' can gain learning opportunities and be supported towards further employment to help provide livelihoods.

(10) **Employment Opportunities**: Apart from the youths in the communities, children also suggested job employments for their parents outside agriculture mainly as the oil exploration activities have dwindled the outputs from fishing and farming.

(11) **Provide Proper Marker Structures**: Market structures in this sense represent properly constructed and accessible roads to markets, parking spaces in the markets, proper construction of stalls, access to toilets in the markets and proper refuse dumps.

Having established the suggestion by children, the next section will focus on suggestion by parents/carers.

7.5.2 Parents/Carers: Suggestions

Figure 7.7 shows some of the recommendations that can help to improve the lives of children. Interestingly, youth empowerment ranked the highest suggestion made by parents/carers followed by the provision of soft loans to parents as the main strategies to improving the lives of children in all communities. A possible explanation for this might be as noted in Chapter Five, the belief that if participants are gainfully employed, it will help them fulfil their parental responsibility towards their children.

Figure 7.7: Suggestions – Parents/carers

7.5.3 Community Leaders: Suggestions

As shown in Figure 7.8, community leaders also indicated a number of suggestions that can help improve the lives of children in the communities. However, similar to the recommendations by parents/carers, the most suggested strategy that can enhance the lives of children was 'youth employment', followed by the 'provision of farming and fishing materials'. The reasons proffered by community leaders for these suggestions are similar to the arguments by parents that adults can provide the needs of children, if the federal government and the oil companies focus on addressing the needs of adults in the communities.

Figure 7.8: Suggestions - Community Leaders
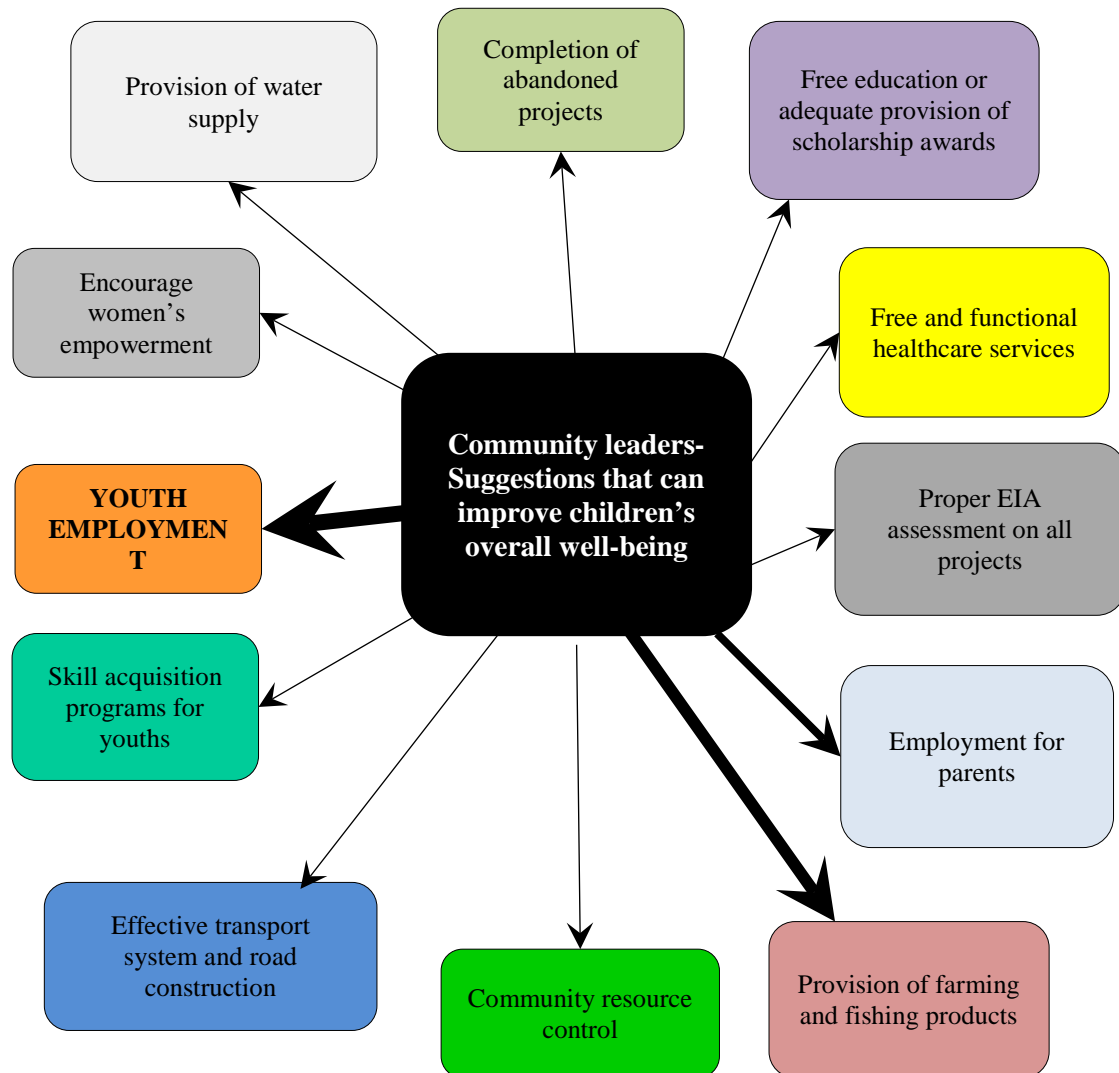
7.5.4   Overview

Results show that children's suggestions in order of priority differed significantly from those of adults (community level) especially the parents/carers and community leaders. For instance, while children considered 'complete free access to education' as the most significant strategy, adults at the community level indicated 'youth empowerment' as a priority for improving the lives of children. Additionally, while children mentioned the need for 'recreational and play activities' amongst other suggestions, none of the adults at the community level recommended this.

Generally, the importance of this finding re-emphasises the importance of listening to children's voices on matters concerning them. Findings also show that while adult's voices are often given privileges in matters concerning children, adults do not always know what children want. Against this backdrop, it is important that development strategies adopted by policy makers takes into consideration the voices of children as expressed by them and not as dictated by adults.

7.6   Chapter Conclusion

The chapter has presented and discussed findings elicited from participants regarding the impacts of oil exploration on child education, work and play spaces. On one hand, the analysis from this chapter reveals that there is an inverse correlation between negative impacts of oil exploration activities and factors such as child education and child play. In other words, an increase in the negative impacts of oil exploration activities such as oil spills, noise pollution and gas flares decreases children's access to education and play spaces. On the other hand, a direct link between the negative impacts of oil exploration activities and child work exists, such that as oil pollution increases, children's works activities and child labour are on the rise.

Regarding children's education, all participants at the children and community levels agreed that the high cost of school fees/levies coupled with the parents'/carers' loss of livelihoods from oil exploration activities are the main impediments to children's education. However, while discussing oil company scholarship awards, children and parents/carers felt that the scholarships should be awarded to children whose families have been affected by oil exploration activities rather than to chiefs or key persons who distribute the scholarships to their children and relatives. Information from school representatives also revealed that, given the poor terrain, poor salary and the lack of basic socio-economic amenities in the communities, the level of commitment of some academic teachers to children's education is dwindling. Most of the school representatives spoke out of frustration expressing clear distinctions about the various 'prices' they pay for choosing to teach in the rural and riverine areas.

Based on these findings, policy makers in the Niger Delta region need to urgently address the problems that teachers face especially in rural oil producing communities, where oil pollution can have a negative impact on teachers' general commitment to education. More

so, results show that children perceived play areas and recreational activities to be very important to their wellbeing, however, adults at the community level did not perceive these key issues that can enhance children's overall wellbeing. The suggestions highlighted by participants also show that children's opinions can differ expressively from those of adults. For instance, while children perceived education as the main factor that can improve their lives in the community, parents/carers and community leaders identified youth employment.

Finally, as re-iterated throughout this study, the most important outcome of this chapter is the significance of listening to children's voice in matters that concern them. The next chapter presents the conclusion part of this research.

8
CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1   Introduction

This conclusion chapter reviews the research and its findings. As outlined in Chapter One, the main aim of the thesis was to examine the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's lives in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, particularly focusing on children's voices in relation to their experiences and coping strategies. The study also aimed to examine adults' perceptions of children's experiences separately in order to engage adults' voices both at the community and national level and to articulate differences of opinion/experiences between the children and the adults where they exist. The chapter summarises the thesis' main findings in these areas. This is followed by an assessment of the study's contribution to the wider research literature, within this specific subject area, as well as in more general theoretical and methodological terms. Subsequently, the chapter suggests some recommendations based on the findings of the study and some pointers towards areas for future studies in this field. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the main discussions.

8.2   Key Findings

The key findings relates to the overall objective of the thesis which focuses on children's perceptions of oil exploration activities, their views on oil wealth benefits within their communities and their perception of the 2003 Children's Rights Act. The findings presented also explore the suggestions articulated by children on how to enhance their wellbeing in the study communities. Although the thrust of the thesis is on children's voices, the study is also about how adults perceive the impacts of oil exploration activities on children's lives. By using the information gathered from the children in combination with the views from adults at the community and national level, a picture has emerged of the wide variety of children's experiences and how children's perceptions can differ from adult's perceptions. Below is a summary of the key findings of the study as drawn from the discussions in the preceding chapters in the following order: voices of children (children's level), voices of adults (community level) and voices of adults (national level).

8.2.1 Voices of Children (Children's Level)

Children's experiences of oil exploration activities are multifaceted. Most of the findings drew attention to the widespread and profound negative impacts that oil exploration activities have on children's lives in the Delta region. Almost every child (including children attending schools and those not attending schools) talked about the negative impacts that oil exploration activities have on their access to basic rights and their general wellbeing. Yet, evidence from children's narratives also shows that children are not passive victims of from the impacts of oil exploration activities, but rather, they negotiate and adapt a variety of strategies to cope with deprivations where they exist. However, some of these strategies, such as eating polluted foods and meal skipping, can be detrimental to children's wellbeing. These reports came from children living in divergent circumstance and culturally diverse communities.

While the experiences of children sometimes varied according to community, findings from the empirical chapters revealed that experiences based on gender, sex and educational status are minimal. For instance, experiences relating to age differences were mainly significant in Ogoniland communities of Rivers State where children between the ages of 14 and 17 appeared to be more informed than younger children on oil company operations (see Chapter Five). This finding was also assumed to be in part that the ages of younger children are significantly correlated with the years of oil company operations, which ended in the mid-nineties. Nonetheless, as shown in the rest of the empirical chapters, younger children were able to articulate their views on the impacts of oil exploration activities such as oil spills that have resulted from oil leaks despite the end of Oil Company operations in the Ogoniland.

In relation to 'gender', the findings on gender differences in children's responses were of importance. However, this was particularly significant when children talked about their experiences in relation to types of play activities. As shown in Section 7.4, while boys mainly talked about football games, girls talked about 'clapping games'. More so, it was surprising that factors such as children's educational attainment made slight differences in children's experiences. Findings revealed that children's educational level was mainly significant when children talked about work activities and types of healthcare service providers in the communities. This was particularly true in Section 7.3 especially as children attending schools tend to engage in work activities in the afternoon/evenings (after

school hours), while children not attending schools began work activities in the mornings. Additionally, in Section 6.4.1, findings revealed that the use of 'prayers' (in churches or from spiritual healers) as healthcare option is generally higher among children not attending schools than in narratives of children attending schools. Considering this, the discussions in the following sub-sections will focus more on children's experiences in relation to their communities.

8.2.1.1 Poor Access to Healthy Food

Many children talked about their poor access to healthy food due to widespread pollution from oil spills and gas flares that have caused soil and rivers/streams to become contaminated. A significant proportion of children talked about the impacts of oil pollution on farms and streams/rivers, such as reduced amount of food production and poor quality of foods produced. Many children also talked about the damage to aquatic life, particularly the deaths of fish in the streams/rivers or fishponds, which most families depend on for food. However, children's experiences did not seem to differ extensively with regards to age, gender or educational status, but appeared to differ mainly between communities. For instance, while children in Bodo community of Rivers State talked about the impacts of oil spills, children in Gbarantoru community of Bayelsa State focused on the impacts of gas flares on access to healthy foods. In Okpai-Oluchi community of Delta State, many children explained that the dumping of chemical wastes by Agip Oil Company kills the fish that they depend on for food.

As shown in Chapter Six, children also indicated a broad range of coping strategies to deal with this situation. However, most of strategies adopted such as skipping meals, swapping nutritional staple food for unhealthy foods and eating polluted or contaminated food have potentially harmful effects on their health. In particular, children admitted to consuming crops and fish from oil spill affected farms and rivers. For instance, many children explained how when oil spills into the river, they wear heavy layers of clothing before getting into the polluted river to catch fish and periwinkles which they consume. The idea of wearing heavy clothing is an attempt to decrease the skin from oil exposure, which has significant health risks. Despite the heavy clothing, children talked about health implications such as skin rashes and breathing difficulties. Some children also talked about eating fish from oil spill polluted streams although this depended on the day of the spill. In this case, the children spoke about consuming fish killed the same day or the next day after

the spill. In other narratives, children explained that in the aftermath of an oil spill in the family farm, they quickly dig up food crops that are perceived to be unaffected by the spill which they consume. The problem however is that some of the crops that the children dig up and consume are immature and not due for harvest.

It was apparent from these narratives, that children understood the adverse health implications of eating polluted food and immature crops; this was evidenced particularly from the fact that children continued this practice despite talking about experiencing stomach problems from eating contaminated food. The single most popular answer to questions relating to the continued consumption of polluted crops is poverty. In particular, children explained that when oil spills destroys family livelihoods, parents/relatives become unemployed and this undermines their role to provide food for their children. By implication, left with limited options, children eat contaminated foods to as a coping strategy. As a result of these impacts, many children do not only adopt harmful coping strategies but also take up a range of extra work activities to provide income and support for their families.

Overall, despite the varieties in experiences, most children believed that oil exploration activities had at least periodically, made access to healthy food much more difficult in the communities.

8.2.1.2 Undermining Access to Clean Water

Children also reported that oil exploration activities were a major factor contributing to the poor access of clean water in their communities. The explanations and narratives that emerged suggest that there is a broad awareness amongst children on the existing problems of accessing adequate clean water due to poor sanitation and non-functional water projects in their communities. Nonetheless, many children explained how pollution from oil exploration activities such as oil spillages, gas flares and effluent waste discharge has worsened the access to clean water in the communities. For instance, children talked about the negative impacts of oil pollution on streams/rivers, which are the main sources of water relied upon for domestic and drinking purposes.

Perhaps more importantly, children mentioned that they also drink polluted water due to the scarcity of alternative and affordable water sources. In Okpai-Oluchi community of Delta State for example, children indicated that despite the effluent waste discharge by oil

companies into their river, they continue to drink from the polluted river. Another underlying reason is that the Okpai-Oluchi community has one major source of water, the River Niger and when it is polluted; most families cannot afford alternative sources of water such as buying sachet water. In some communities such as Gbarantoru community of Bayelsa State, children explained that, although they immediately stop drinking water from oil-spilled rivers/streams, they however, continue to use it for domestic purposes such as bathing and washing of cloths. The difficulty with this practice is the associated health problem such as body rashes and skin itching.

While discussing the use of rainwater, children believed that the process of gas flaring releases pollutants into the atmosphere, which can cause acid rain, thus making rainwater unfit for drinking or for domestic use. Despite this understanding, the vast majority of children still use and drink rainwater due to the limited and unaffordable options to accessing water in the communities. As a result there were numerous narratives of children experiencing stomach pains after drinking rainwater and body rashes from bathing or washing with rainwater. Many children also talked about non-functional water projects in the communities, which further exacerbate the problem of poor access to clean water. Children indicated that water projects hardly exist and where they do, they are often non-functional and unsustainable.

Overall, while the experiences and coping strategies adopted by children to deal with poor access to water varied across communities, there was a common sense of underlying health implications from using water that had been contaminated as a result of oil pollution.

8.2.1.3 Health Problems

The majority of children indicated widespread concerns about the health problems caused by oil exploration activities on land, water and air. Particularly, children linked their experiences of oil spills and gas flaring incidences to health issues such as stomach pain, headaches, rashes, diarrhoea and fever. These narratives however varied between the communities. For instance, many children in the Ogoniland communities of Rivers State talk about stomach irritations from drinking water and eating contaminated foods as a result of gas flares and oil spills. Children in these communities also added the emergence of 'strange' and known diseases in the communities as a result of from oil exploration activities. In addition to the experiences of children in Rivers State, children in the

Ogbolomai community of Bayelsa State added cases of eye problems experienced from gas flaring incidents to the negative impacts of oil exploration processes. Further, children in Gbarantoru community of Bayelsa State included problems such as headaches caused by loud noises from heavy pipeline construction activities to the already negative experiences of oil exploration activities mentioned by other children.

The majority of children also mentioned that health problems are made worse with the poor access to healthcare services in the communities. Although some community health centres exist, children reported they were either ill equipped or too expensive. The poor state of inadequate healthcare services tends to force many children and their families to reply on chemists as the main healthcare provider in the communities. However, the problems associated with relying on chemists include; poor storage drug system by chemists and the inability of chemists to deal with cases of emergency. Additionally, in Okpai-Oluchi community of Delta State, children also talked about the exorbitant costs of transportation to these chemists as a deterrent to getting healthcare. In communities such as Bodo community of Rivers State, children reported that due to poor rural electrification in the communities, most chemists do not stock up perishable medications, thus some important drugs that can are not stock by chemists. More so, due to the unaffordable cost of medicines from chemists, some children opt for traditional medicines and spiritual healing from churches. Although functional hospitals exist in the towns, many children mentioned that they are often too expensive and the majority of the families in the communities cannot afford to pay the high costs of hospital bills. Generally, while many children acknowledged that oil exploration activities are not directly responsible for the poor state of healthcare services, they however believe that the income lost from livelihoods as result of oil exploration activities could have been used to pay for medicines.

8.2.1.4 Negative Effects on Access to Education

Children talked freely about a range of problems associated with their poor access to education such as costs of school fees/levies, uniforms, shoes and books, poor transportation and the necessity of walking long distances to schools. However, many children also mentioned the negative impacts that oil exploration activities have on child education in the communities. Specifically, children in Bayelsa State communities talked about direct experiences of how noise pollution from oil exploration sites can cause distraction during school hours, which undermines their learning processes. Additionally, a

considerable number of children explained how oil pollution incidents could cause a sudden transition from a 'child attending school' to a 'child becoming a dropout'.

By this, children explained that when oil pollution cause families to lose livelihoods and resources, parents/carers become unemployed and cannot cope with the financial burden of paying school fees and other school requirements - consequently, children can be withdrawn by their parents from school. There was also the common belief expressed by many children that instead of spending money on child education, many families spend their resources on avoidable problems caused by oil exploration activities such as diseases, polluted water, destroyed roofs, etc.

To cope with these challenges, children adopt strategies such as reducing the financial demands on their parents by skipping meals or going to school hungry. Children also mentioned they sometimes attend schools without proper uniforms, books or school shoes, as a way of reducing the family's financial burden. In another coping strategy adopted, a significant proportion of children talked about enrolling and attending schools at the beginning of the term but dropping out towards the end of the school term. Children who drop out of school towards the end of school term adopt this strategy particularly as most schools allow free registration and attendance at the beginning of the term. However, towards the end of term, children are not allowed to partake in examinations or promotional assessments unless they have made a complete payment of school fees/ exam levies and other outstanding fees. This finding has a practical implication on reports relating to child education. Mainly as child enrolment, does not mean children often attend and complete their education as evidenced in this study.

Results also reveal that although some children recognised the provision of scholarship awards and bursaries as part of the oil companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitments, many children perceived the scholarship awards as very few compared to the numbers of children whose educational opportunities had been adversely affected by problems associated with oil exploration activities. Additionally, children expressed disappointments that the oil companies exempt primary school children from the scholarship awards while focusing strictly on secondary and tertiary institutions. Furthermore, while many children perceived the building of schools by oil companies and the NDDC as a positive sign, children added that these schools often lacked basic amenities such as adequate classrooms, access to water, toilets, and vital school facilities.

Referring to the low quality of education received, many children also talked about the problems associated with inadequate, unqualified teachers and short-term teachers evidenced in most schools. However, problem of inadequate teachers was attributed to the concerns of oil pollution and lack of adequate infrastructures, which makes the community unattractive to qualified teachers. For instance, it was noted that the problems of oil spills and polluted streams impact negatively on teachers who tend to spend more money accessing clean water in the communities than their colleagues who work in towns and cities.

8.2.1.5 Increase in Child Work Activities

Generally, children talked about their engagements in a variety of work activities, which include domestic chores, fetching water, fishing, farming and selling in the markets. Many children perceive these activities as a means to assist and support their families who significantly depend on fishing and farming for livelihood, sustenance and income. However, the narratives that emerged suggest that the negative impacts of oil exploration activities have tended to increase children's work activities and cause hardship. For instance, children narrated experiences of how a simple domestic chore such as getting water from the stream/rivers for drinking and other domestic purposes can become impossible. To illustrate this, when oil spills in rivers/streams, most of the children may need to travel long distances (by walking) to other communities in search of clean water or spend their scarce income buying water. Another problem is that due to the scarcity of boreholes, children tend to have to stand in line for long hours to buy water.

Furthermore, some children indicated that when oil spills in the farms, it could affect the simple process of selling crops. For instance, due to oil spill in farms, children tend to wash oranges thoroughly with detergents (which is an added cost), in an attempt to deodorise it and remove the oil odour and taste of paraffin. This practice of using detergents may have some additional health risks for the community at large. More so, some children also mentioned the burden placed on them when family fishponds are affected by oil spills and/or gas flares. According to children, fishing activities that ordinarily involved basic and mastery skills learned from parents and relatives can often become potential health risks. By this, children referred to the health risks involved in trying to get fish from oil-polluted streams. Another area of difficulty mentioned by children, particularly in Bodo community of Rivers State, is the problem associated with

roads constructed by oil companies, which has blocked the short walks and easy access to family farms, thereby forcing them to make long and tiring distances to farms.

Overall, a vast majority of children believe that when oil pollution affects family livelihoods, their parents/carers become unemployed. With the loss of income, they tend to face economic pressures by fending for themselves and supporting their families. To cope with these challenges, children often engage in multiple work activities such as selling of recharge cards, and working in constructions sites owned by oil company sub-contractors. As noted earlier, these activities can have negative impacts on children's lives mainly as the conditions of work can be harmful to children's wellbeing.

8.2.1.6   Destructive Effects on Sanitation and Housing Facilities

Children provided detailed information on the poor sanitation services in their communities such as access to bathrooms, toilets, and wastewater treatments. For instance, due to the poor access to proper toilet facilities and safe drinking water, the rivers/stream, which children use for drinking purposes, also serves as sites for open defecation. Despite the existing poor sanitation levels in the region, children expressed the view that oil exploration activities have further damaged access to sanitation in the communities. Children in Ogoniland communities of Rivers State, for example, commented on the slow response and inadequate clean-up processes of oil spill sites in rivers and farms, which has worsened sanitation conditions in the community. Additionally children in in Okpai-Oluchi communities of Delta State commented on the sanitation problems caused by the effluent waste discharge in the rivers by oil companies.

There was also evidence that oil exploration activities have impacted negatively on children's access to proper housing facilities. For instance, many children talked about the damages which acid rain, resulting from oil exploration processes cause on the thatch and zinc roofs of their homes. They also added that this places a burden on their families, who often spend more resources mending and buying new roofs. Many children also mentioned the problems associated with lack or irregular electricity supply in their communities. However, a few children, such as children in Oporoza community of Delta State indicated they enjoyed uninterrupted access to power supply provided by oil companies. Although, many children acknowledged that oil exploration activities are not directly responsible for problems of rural electrification, they however expressed that when families lose

livelihoods as a result of oil exploration activities, it also affects their financial resources, which could have been used to purchase private electric generators in their homes.

8.2.1.7 Adverse Impacts on Play Spaces

Stories from children suggest that the use of spaces for swimming and playing football is of vital importance to their lives. However, many children talked about how hazards from oil pollution can disrupt the play areas in home settings. For instance, in the event of oil spill in rivers /streams, children are forced to abandon swimming in a particular area. More so, children in Rivers State communities specifically talked about abandoning football fields as a result of fire erupting from oil spilled sites. Overall, children indicated that the opportunities to take part in play activities could be severely compromised by a range of factors resulting from oil exploration activities. This is mainly as the play areas surrounding the streams/river are also potential key sites for social interaction in the communities

8.2.1.8 Negative Perception of Oil Wealth Benefits

The majority of children talked about lack of oil wealth benefits by reflecting on the social deprivations and inadequate access to basic rights such as clean water, healthy food, healthcare and education in the communities. Findings show that there is a deep conflict between children's expectations of oil wealth benefits and the reality of poor infrastructures in their communities. Drawing on the notion that the majority of the Niger Delta communities are hosts of oil wealth resources that the nation's economy depends on, many children expressed a considerable level of disappointments and unmet expectations from government and the oil companies.

Overall, it was clear that many of the children expected to see considerable improvements in their lives and in the infrastructural developments in their communities rather than poverty and hardship, which tends to be the major dividends of oil exploration activities.

8.2.1.9 Lack of Awareness of the 2003 Children's Rights Acts (CRA)

Despite the promulgation of the CRA into law by all the Niger Delta States, most children did not seem to be aware of the existence or provision of any act that is aimed at enhancing their access to basic rights. It was surprising that this finding did not differ across

communities or between children attending or not-attending schools. This evidence thus suggests a low commitment on the part of government in creating awareness, sensitization and implementation of the CRA especially in rural communities.

Having illustrated the key findings regarding children's experiences, children also expressed their views of how their circumstances could be improved as shown below.

8.2.1.10 Children's Suggestions for Improving Their Lives

Children identified a number of suggestions representing all major areas that can improve their lives and access to basic rights in the communities. Notably, 'access to a completely free education' ranked the highest suggestion by children. The suggestions that they made included:

i) Improved standards of education through provision of a completely free educational scheme for all children, refurbishment of schools and provision of modern school facilities. Improved recreational and play activities in school and home environments. Provision of a special package for teachers in the rural areas as a motivational strategy to improve quality of education.

ii) Children's health should be considered as a priority when addressing oil exploration activities because of the negative impacts that oil exploration activities have on their lives.

iii) Reduction or complete elimination of oil pollution from oil exploration activities, adequate compensation for affected families of oil pollution,

iv) Training programmes that can strengthen local people's agricultural skills, employment opportunities for families and soft-loans to support parents in setting up businesses.

v) Creating an awareness of the CRA across rural communities and an improved socio-economic status of communities through an enhanced access to clean water, health food, transportation, electricity, sanitation facilities and other social amenities.

vi) Effective transportation system within the communities, constant electricity supplies, replaced roofing systems in their homes, proper drainage and sanitation facilities.

The above section has presented a summary of the key findings in relation to the voices of children who participated in the study. The next section will focus on adult voices at the community level.

8.2.2 Voices of Adults (Stakeholders at Community Level)

This section and the following sub-sections, provides an overview of the key findings for the stakeholders in the communities studied. The stakeholders represent the responses from three groups of participants namely: parents/carers, community leaders and school representatives. Generally, there exist similarities among adult's responses when compared with children's voices on the negative impacts of oil exploration activities. However, of utmost importance to this study is that the explanations and narratives that emerged from adults also revealed different views and significant contradictions to the views of the children explored in the previous section. Much of the discussion reflects how adults are simply trying to express the negative impacts of oil exploration activities in their communities and their perceived responsibilities to children. The most important issue to adults seemed to be their concern about the impacts of oil pollution on their livelihoods and the intense economic pressures from these challenges. The key findings in the study of adult's voices at community level include the following:

8.2.2.1 Adults Under-Report Children's Experiences

While there is broad awareness among adults that oil exploration activities have affected family livelihoods, which children depend on for food, there is much under-reporting on the impacts it has on children. For instance, although many adults asserted that when livelihoods are lost, children are often encouraged to take up various jobs to provide income for the families, they however, very rarely mentioned children's coping strategies such as eating foods directly from oil spill polluted sites. The majority of adults (parents/carers) did not also feel that children selling polluted foods such as contaminated oranges in the markets as a survival strategy was important to mention. More so, other experiences narrated by the children such as digging up and consuming immature crops, in the aftermath of an oil spill were not mentioned by adults. Further, although many adults talked about 'youths' (which comprise of individuals younger than the age of 14) adopting resistance strategies through protests, demonstrations or militant actions against oil company operations as a means to get compensations or attention, there were however, no reflections on the impacts of such strategies on children's lives. For instance, many adults in the Ogoniland communities of Rivers State talked about the protests and demonstrations by youths that eventually forced Shell out of Ogoniland communities, but were reluctant to explain the experiences of children involved in such demonstrations.

Overall, the general impression from the interviews with adult community members was that the adults assume to know what children want and act as proxies for children. This finding has a serious implication for the under-reporting and marginalisation of children's voices in the Niger Delta region.

8.2.2.2 Conflicting Hierarchy in Addressing the Impacts on Oil Exploration Activities

Evidence from stakeholders revealed that adults often put themselves first when discussing problems associated with oil exploration activities in the communities. Many adults, particularly parents/carers and community leaders tend to have a ranking that differs from children's presentation. As mentioned in Section 8.2.1.10, children believe that their interests particularly health issues, should be addressed as a priority when discussing oil exploration impacts. However, it appears from the views of adult community members that the federal government and oil companies should address the interests of parents/carers followed by those of the 'youths' before other categories of people. Findings as shown in Section 5.3.1 also reveal that 'youths' in this sense represents individuals above the age of 14. Interestingly, this ranking by adults did not take into specific consideration the interests of children below the ages of 14.

This finding tends to suggest that the perceived ranking by adults marginalises the experiences and voices of children. The majority of the adults believe that if the federal government and oil companies address their personal concerns, it will automatically provide an enabling environment for parents/adults to address the needs of their children. Specifically, children's access to basic needs such as healthy food was considered by many parents/carers as an issue that can be addressed by them, if policy makers address the remote cause of their difficulties, which is the destruction of family livelihoods by oil exploration activities.

8.2.2.3 Conflicting Suggestions on How to Enhance the Lives of Children

While discussing suggestions that can enhance the lives of children, youth employment and the provision of employment for parents/carers was ranked the most desirable strategy by many adults. Drawing on the discussion in the preceding section, it is believed by many adults that livelihoods have severely suffered from oil pollution and this has affected parental responsibilities towards children. Thus, the provision of employment by the oil

companies would provide the income needed to address the interests of children. This finding clearly differs from children's views where many children laid emphasis on a completely free education the most suggested strategy that can enhance their lives.

8.2.2.4 Adults Do Not Have Homogeneous Views on Child Work/labour

Many parents/carers and community leaders expressed the view that oil companies should provide their children with jobs, particularly those above the ages of 14, perceived to be the youths. This view was contradicted by the views of school representatives who expressed that construction jobs offered to children have had negative impacts on children's access to education. Specifically, school representatives believe that parents/carers often advise their children to look for oil company jobs instead of encouraging them to attend schools. This finding re-emphasises the need to listen to children's voices in matters concerning them.

8.2.2.5 Adults Show Clear Discontentment about Oil Company and Federal Government Performances

Many adults confirmed children's narratives regarding some development projects by oil companies such as building of schools and provision of electricity. However, while children perceived some of these projects as positive but inadequate, adults displayed clear discontentment and did not often attribute these efforts as positive impacts in the communities.

8.2.2.6 Adults have a Different Understanding of 'Play' Compared to Children

Many adults do not share the same perception with children on the importance of play spaces. Specifically, a significant proportion of adults did not seem to consider the impacts of oil exploration on children's play spaces as a key issue, particularly when compared to the impacts of oil pollution on livelihoods. Similarly, within the school environment, while children talked about inadequate access to recreational activities and play activities, many of the school representatives did not view this as a major problem when discussing the quality of education in the schools.

The above discussion has highlighted the main findings with adults in the communities, who participated in this study. The next section will present the perceptions of adult participants at national level.

8.2.3 Voices of Adults (National Level)

As noted earlier, critical to this study is that the numerous expectations that were mentioned by children were often different from the perceptions of what adults perceived to be important. Thus, the key findings here will focus on the perceptions of national-level participants regarding children's experiences of oil exploration activities and children's access to oil wealth benefits. The participants contacted at the national level comprised of representatives including; Shell Oil Company, Chevron Oil Company, NDDC (Federal Government Agency), NDAF (a non-governmental organisation) and UNICEF: Child Welfare Department of the State Ministry of Women Affairs (Rivers State). Below are the main findings:

8.2.3.1 Children Are Not Primary Target Groups of Oil Companies and the NDDC

Evidence from responses of the NDDC and oil company representatives tends to suggest that the experiences and voices of children in the Niger Delta region have received little attention. To put this into perspective, children are not often the primary target groups when addressing the concerns of people in the Niger Delta region. For instance, the NDDC representative agreed that this was the case, stating that 'there are no special programmes or projects (other than educational projects) that are targeted at children… we do not engage in child related projects because we work within a mandate'. Interestingly, the NDDC representative also added that the Commission mainly focuses on poverty alleviation plans and skill acquisition programmes targeted at individuals from the age of 18 upwards. Considering this, the organisational structure of the NDDC has departments for youths and women but not for children.

Concomitantly, the representatives of the oil companies talked about programmes for the wider community benefiting particularly the 'youths' and women. In this case, a youth is perceived to be an individual from age of 18 upwards. This definition resonated with the NDDC perception and the Federal Government representation as explored in more detail in Chapter Three. However, apart from educational support programmes, the oil company representatives indicated that the interests of children are not a specific concern of their

operations. The consideration of groups other than children may be due to a shared feeling amongst the adults in the communities that the needs and voices of children are often represented by parents/carers. As noted in Chapter One, the youths in particular, have drawn national and international attention by engaging in protests and conflicts with the federal government and the oil companies in relation to their concerns over damages and poverty posed by oil pollution. Thus, oil companies have often focused on responding to the voices of youths, rather than children's voices as a means to address community concerns. However, drawing on the voices of children, the study reveals that adults in the communities often overlook and undervalue the experiences of children when acting on their behalf. Thus, it does not always follow that adults in the communities know what children need.

8.2.3.2 Inadequate Commitment to Critical Areas of Education

The Oil Company and NDDC representatives indicated that the building of schools and awarding of scholarships/bursaries was a key area of activity in improving education in the communities. However, evidence from children's experiences tends to suggest that these initiatives lacked adequate commitment. Referring to the building of schools, children revealed that none of the schools constructed had vital functional facilities such as access to clean water and toilet facilities. As a result, within school environments, the majority of children drink water from untreated wells, which are often polluted by gas flares. Many children also talked about bringing water from their homes, which are also periodically affected by oil pollution in the streams/rivers. Further, children added that they use the bush (referred to as the 'creeks') as toilets since none of the schools constructed in the communities have functional toilets. Findings also show that many children reported the classrooms as overcrowded and the general states of the schools in disrepair, needing extensive refurbishments. By providing rural communities with schools that undermine their access to key educational facilities, it can be argued that school projects often proceeded without adequate consideration to effective ways that can enhance access to education.

Referring to the provision of scholarships/bursaries by oil companies, the over-riding view of the children is that the number of awards was too few when compared to the number of children facing poor access to education resulting from destruction of family livelihoods by oil company activities. More so, findings from oil company representatives reveal that the

provision of scholarships/bursaries programmes is targeted at secondary pupils (in the second year), and tertiary institutions while primary schools are completely exempted. In this way, this scheme automatically disqualifies primary school children where education aims at basic literacy and numeracy skills. It also disqualifies poor children who have never been to school or secondary school children or who have dropped out in their first years due to financial difficulties or other reasons, which may be related to oil pollution.

Overall, the majority of the evidence gathered from oil company representatives reveals that some key areas that could enhance children's access to education in the communities are lacking.

8.2.3.3   Poor Commitment to the Community Development Programmes

According to the oil company and the NDDC representatives, there are numerous development projects targeted at developing and enhancing the lives of people within the researched communities and these projects are driven through a transparent and participatory community approach. As explained by the Chevron oil company representative, the approach encourages project monitoring and accountability practice to ensure project effectiveness. However, evidence gathered from children and from direct observations does not appear to confirm this assertion. For instance, the majority of the water projects located within the communities were found to be non-functional and unsustainable; this undermines children's access to clean water. Children noted that the main reason why many water projects are unsustainable is that after their construction by oil companies, the projects are often left to be administered by poor community members who cannot maintain or provide the funds needed to buying diesel/petrol that powers the water machines. Thus, these projects become non-functional, unsustainable and ultimately abandoned.

8.2.3.4   Activities Do Not Encourage Child Participation

Drawing on the responses from the oil companies and NDDC representatives, it stands to reason that children were not often involved in the planning and implementation of development programmes in matters concerning children. Although, oil companies claim to have a memorandum of understanding with communities, that is driven by participation and transparency. However, evidence suggests that children are not often encouraged to participate in these initiatives and community leaders do not adequately represent their

voices. The case of school buildings lacking key infrastructures such as toilet facilities is a clear example that children's voices were not incorporated as part of the projects design plan. As this study has demonstrated, it is not helpful when adults assume they know what children needs, rather than encouraging children to share their personal experiences and listening to children's voices which would help understand and address their specific needs and expectations more effectively.

8.2.3.5 Conflicting Information on Children's Access to Healthcare Services

According to the oil company representatives, the provision of free medical services to children is a key area of corporate social responsibility in the region and a specific development programme aimed at enhancing the lives of children has been established. However, evidenced gathered from children's narratives and direct observations do not seem to corroborate this claim. To begin with, none of the children supported the claim of free medical care by oil companies. More so, the majority of children evidenced that where community hospitals exist, they lack healthcare facilities such as proper staffing, prescriptions and technical services. Drawing on direct observations, some community health centres were sighted while visiting the communities; however, they were not functional and lacked basic hospital facilities such as proper staffing, electricity and water. Besides, evidence from children, which pointed to the over-reliance on chemists as their main healthcare service provider clearly depicts the inadequate access to healthcare services in the communities.

8.2.3.6 Contradictory Information Regarding Children Working With Oil Company Sub-Contractors

While children talked about experiences related to construction jobs with sub-contractors of oil companies, responses from oil company representatives refuted such claims. This finding may mean that the ways in which some oil companies engage and monitor their sub-contractors in the communities is a significant area needing concern.

8.2.3.7 Lack of Information, Resources or Support on How to Cope With Oil Pollution

Oil companies claim to have developed mechanisms that provide access to information and resources on how to deal with hazards from oil exploration activities. However, the

information gathered from children, particularly on the harmful coping strategies they have adopted to deal with adverse impacts of oil pollution, suggests that there exist inadequate mechanisms for communicating accurate information on how to cope with hazards from oil pollution. Perhaps more importantly, the evidence demonstrated in this study suggests that many children have consistently relied on the consumption of polluted foods and water, a phenomenon, which can be related to the lack of information they have received on how to cope when affected by oil pollution. It is also true to say that evidence also suggests that although children are often aware of the dangers associated with the consumption of polluted foods, they have little information on alternatives.

8.2.3.8   Real Commitment to Enhancing Children's Access to Basic Needs

Responses from oil company representatives indicate there they have adopted swift and effective approaches to handling concerns of oil pollution resulting from oil exploration activities. However, evidence gathered from children's experiences and direct observations do not seem to support these indications. Many children talked about the extensive negative impacts that oil pollution have on their access to basic needs such as healthy food, clean water, health, play spaces, education, etc., especially with the re-occurring incidents of oil spills, effluent waste dumping and gas flaring. Further, despite the promulgation of the CRA by all the States of the Niger Delta region, oil companies do not seem to take into considerations the principles of this initiative that can enhance children's everyday lives. As noted by the UNICEF representative in Port Harcourt, education and health deprivations are key areas needing attending by children particularly in Rivers State, yet the oil companies have not adequately addressed these concerns.

Having summarized some of the key empirical findings relating to children and adults voices, the next section will reflect on the main contributions of this study to the wider literature.

8.3   Contributions of the Research

Moving away from discussions on empirical findings, this next section outlines the broader contributions of the study, illustrating how the study has provided insights into the literatures on children, childhood and the broader analysis of the impacts of oil exploration in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study's contribution to knowledge is also identified on the basis of its contribution to addressing the research problem and in

achieving the proposed aim and multiple objectives of the research. To this end, the thesis makes two principal contributions – theoretical and methodological, which will be discussed as follows;

8.3.1 Theoretical Contributions to Knowledge

This study has several theoretical contributions, which aim to demonstrate that this study goes beyond existing understanding of the problem studied. A summary of the study's contribution to knowledge will be discussed below:

8.3.1.1 Children's Voices

The clearest theoretical contribution of the research has been to existing debates regarding giving greater prominence to children's views and listening to children's voices. As shown in Chapter Two, the general tendency within academic research tends to give adults' views a privileged position in relation to children's voices, which are often undervalued or overlooked. Thus, adults often act on behalf of children and assume to know what children want. By presenting children's voices and their experiences as narrated by them, this study contributes to the group of researchers in social sciences, and disciplines such as geography who have focused on allowing children's voices to be heard and their experiences brought to light (e.g. Katz, 2004; Ansell, 2005; Abebe, 2007; Skelton, 2000/2007; Norman, 2012). However, this study goes further by presenting both children and adult's views separately to allow children's voices be heard and valued in their own right. This approach does not only contribute to the studies ensuring that children's voices are represented in the debate but the significant distinctions in children and adult's viewpoints emphasizes that children are competent social construct who can articulate their own views on matters concerning them.

8.3.1.2 Children's Experiences in the Global South

This thesis also contributes to studies that bring the experiences of children from the global South into focus. As noted in Chapter Two, research on children's experiences has enjoyed greater attention in the global North, while academic analysis of the lives of children and the nature of childhood in the global South is an emerging field. The growing interests in the voices and experiences of African children can be seen in studies such as van Blerk and Ansell (2006) and Thorsen (2005), focusing on various underlying reasons for children's

migration in rural African communities. Other authors such as Porter (2010) and Evans and Holt (2011) have explored the implications of disadvantages posed by mobility in rural African settings. Additionally authors such as Robson (2004), Kesby *et al*., (2006) and Skovdal *et al.* (2009) have expanded our understandings of children's experiences with a particular focus on the damaging effect of HIV/AIDs in African rural societies. By drawing on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria as a case study, this research has contributed to studies of childhood in the global South by revealing the diversity of childhoods within a multi-ethnic region and presenting the children's lived experiences and coping strategies in relation to the impacts of oil exploration activities in region.

8.3.1.3   Children in the Niger Delta Region

As noted in Chapter One, very little of the research into the impacts of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta has engaged directly with children about their experiences. Whilst this research drew on previous studies focusing on the impacts of oil exploration (e.g., HRW, 2002; Aaron, 2005; UNDP, 2006; Watts, 2008; Amnesty International, 2009, Idemudia, 2009; Omotola, 2010; Orogun, 2010; Dode, 2011) to demonstrate some of the ways that oil exploration activities have negatively affected the lives of people in the Niger Delta region, the value of this study lies in its direct engagement with children's experiences and voices. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to the studies concerning the socio-economic impacts of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Specifically, by focusing on the marginalised voices of children, this study extends beyond the traditional focus of theoretical and conceptual debates around oil exploration impacts on local people and their livelihoods in the Niger Delta region by introducing a new focus on the lived experiences of children. Perhaps more importantly, that the research has demonstrated that adult's understandings and interpretations often contradict with those of children and that children's experiences are often under-reported by adults in the region.

8.3.1.4   Children as Social Actors

In the course of this study, this thesis drew upon the UN framework of children's rights and the 'new' social studies of childhood to offer fresh insights into the problem under study. While the UN and traditional social science literatures on children often portray the child as passive bearers of socialisation and objects of study without any experiences, the

new social studies of childhood approach is framed by the assumption that children are active social actors and should be studied in their own right. This research draws upon this new social studies of childhood approach to bring children's everyday lives within the Niger Delta together with large-scale geopolitical and economic phenomena, recognising children as active members of their communities and societies (e.g. Qvortrup, 1987; Skelton, 2000; James and Prout, 2001, Schildkrout, 2002, Ennew, 2003; Katz, 2004; Ansell, 2005; Kesby *et al.*, 2006; Abebe, 2007; Benwell, 2009).

This study has demonstrated children's active economic roles in their communities via their role in sustaining the family traditions of fishing and farming in the communities. For instance, based on the literature reviewed, traditionally, children in the Niger Delta region appear to have been perceived as physically immature, adult becoming and under adult hegemony. As such their engagement in child work can best be seen as an element within a pattern of training and socialisation (Ottenber, 1965; Kpone-Tonwe, 2001). However, the complex political-economic processes of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region have transformed these perceptions, mainly as parents have gradually come to perceive their children as social actors who can provide income for themselves and even support the family.

Additionally, by capturing the range of diverse strategies adopted by children to cope in difficult circumstances, the research reveals other ways in which children are active actors who have negotiated a variety of ways to deal with the impacts of the oil pollution created by oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region. For instance, as suggested above, the narratives from children show that as a result of oil pollution, they have taken up jobs and even taken over family responsibilities when parents lose their livelihoods. Children also cope with loses of income within the home by limiting their financial demands (for example, going to school without shoes, books or school uniforms). Although, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it should not be forgotten that some of the coping strategies adopted by children, such as skipping meals and eating polluted foods, are harmful to their well-being.

In Chapter Two, it was also noted in the context of social competence, that the new studies approach towards childhood argues that children need to be seen as competent and actively constructing their own identities. As stated by Prout and James, (1990:8), "children are and must be seen as active in the social construction and determination of their own social

lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live". However, the findings of this study demonstrate that although children are visible in the study communities, their voices are marginalised, making them invisible in decision-making processes. To put it differently, children are often excluded from participating in policy processes and are not considered as competent actors with the right or a voice in influencing policies.

8.3.1.5 Complexities of Implementing Children's Rights: UNCRC

Another important academic contribution of this research concerns the debates on the complexities of implementing the children's rights principles as propelled by the UN in African societies (e.g. Skelton and Valentine, 2003; Cheney, 2005; Such and Walker, 2005; White and Choudhury, 2007; Moses, 2008; Skovdal *et al.,* 2009). By presenting a more nuanced understanding of children's access to basic rights within different structural contexts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, this study shows that the federal government and the oil companies have not given adequate commitment to implementing the principles of the UN's framework. As noted in this study, the Nigerian government have adopted the UN's notion of children's rights such as the UNCRC, African Charter and the domesticated CRA, which aims to enhance children's access to basic needs. However, evidence from the study tends to suggest that the actions of the federal government and oil companies have constantly infringed on children's basic rights. Thus, rather than enhancing the lives of children through some kind of oil production dividend, oil exploration activities have tended to contribute towards the enhancement of poverty and deprivation amongst the region's children.

This finding supports Grugel's (2013) argument that while the UNCRC has contributed to making children more 'visible' by encouraging state parties adopt initiatives and strategies that can enhance children's lives, the reality is that state parties particularly in the South, often adopt the principles of the UNCRC, without devoting attention or adding effective importance to implementing the standards of the UNCRC. Grugel's study maintains that the UNCRC should not only stop at encouraging countries become state parties, but should consider strategies and reforms that can turn the principles and agenda of the UNCRC into practice.

8.3.1.6 Definition of 'the child'

This thesis also adds an insight to studies that focus on the problems of using western age categorisations to define a child in African societies (See Ansell, 2005; Rama and Richter, 2007; Espey *et al.,* 2010). As shown in Chapter Two, the Nigerian government and all the Niger Delta States have promulgated into law the definition of a child as any individual below the age of 18 based on the UN ideologies. However, the research demonstrated that there is lack of a universally accepted definition of the child in rural areas. For instance, during discussions with adults at the community level, the majority of the participants talked about the 'youths', which they suggested included individuals between the ages of 14 and 45. The youths in this context are also perceived as individuals that can actively engage in youth movements with oil companies as a way of demanding compensation and control over the enormous oil resources in the region. Thus, children are generally perceived within the communities to be individuals below the ages of 14. This finding brings into play a number of other influences on the theorisation of the child/adult relationship not previously considered in the literature, with, for example, participation within political movements being identified within the study communities as one of the factors used in defining where childhood ends and adult life begins.

8.3.1.7 Child Work/Labour Perspectives

This research has also provided knowledge about how child work is perceived by African societies. Specifically, the study agrees with social scientists such as Kesby *et al.*, 2006, that the western standards of childhood which conceptualises childhood as free from work is a misfit in African societies. According to the universal model of childhood portrayed by international institutions such as the UN and the ILO, the combination of work and school for children below the ages of 12 would be viewed strongly negatively as a form of exploitative child labour. However, evidence from this study shows that some children between the ages of 10 and 12 who attend schools, also work in farms, fishing ponds and constructions sites.

As argued by authors such as Bonnet (2003), Robson, (2004), Chant and Jones (2005), while work may affect children's educational progress in the school environment, work undeniably contributes to family income which helps to pay required school fees and other school requirements. Evidence from this study also reveals that child work is a basic

source of income to family resources. Thus, focus should be on the condition of work and factors that contribute to making child work dangerous. For instance, the present study revealed that the impacts of oil spill on rivers could make fishing activities in polluted rivers an unsafe work.

Additionally, findings from this study demonstrate that children's work activities in the Niger Delta region have been significantly altered by oil exploration activities. From the perspective of studies relating to how children's work activities in African societies have been shaped by international and local pressures, this finding adds an insight to knowledge. Within this area of study, writers such as Abebe (2007) have focused on children's domestic work patterns and the way these have been shaped by exploitative international trade systems in Ethiopia. Robson's (2004) paper on children's work as young carers in Zimbabwe drew our attention to the challenges faced by young carers as a result of the HIV/AIDs explosion. Similarly, authors such as Skovdal *et al*. (2009) have critically examined the changes in children's work in Kenya and revealed how the damaging effect of HIV/AIDS have affected children's domestic activities. Also exploring this theme is Nwiro's (2010) paper, which drew the links between rise of child labour in Nigeria and the growth in poverty by illustrating the significant role of the oil boom of the 1970s as a factor that spurred the increase in child labour.

The present study offers a complementary and yet different addition to this literature by revealing that oil exploration activities have shaped and continue to shape the economic and cultural pattern of local people's lives in the Niger Delta. Drawing on discussions in Chapter Three, it was noted that traditionally, parents (particularly women) sustained their families through farming, fishing and trading, however many families have lost their livelihoods as a result of episodic oil spill incidences. As shown in Chapter Seven, when families lose their livelihoods due to the negative impacts of oil exploration activities, it can also result in significant changes in children's work patterns. The changes include increasing pressure and burden on children who tend to engage in multiple work activities in order to cope with the periodic impacts of oil pollution on family livelihoods. Additionally in the event of an oil spill in the river, simple domestic chores such as getting water from the river can become very difficult. This is mainly as children often need to walk to other distant streams or stand in long queues to buy water from boreholes in communities where they exist.

Having illustrated the key theoretical contributions of this study, we now move on to the research's contribution to methodological knowledge.

8.3.2 Methodological Contributions to Knowledge

Through the methodology employed and the combination of data collection methods used, this thesis offers a distinctive contribution to how knowledge is created. An important methodological contribution of this research is the way it has used different techniques to gather data from different groups of participants (children, community and national levels) and exploring how these different participants interplay across nine different communities in three different States.

The study primarily utilised a qualitative approach and this included in-depth interviews, focus groups, and direct observations techniques as well as photography, audio recordings and secondary data from sources such as newspapers, web- based information, published and unpublished documents. Thus, this study benefitted from a wide range of data collection methods and these different techniques yielded diverse types of data, which were used for a range of reasons and throughout the study. By adopting different qualitative techniques to present children and adult voices separately, the study ensured that participants are given space and attention, so that their experiences and concerns can be articulated, realised and communicated to the reader as directly as possible.

For instance, as noted in Chapter Four, while collecting data from children, the in-depth interview technique was viewed as appropriate for children not attending schools due to its flexibility and the concern that children were found in different various informal settings such as homes, streams, farms, etc. This technique allowed children to be more comfortable and helped to avoid constraining their responses. On the other hand, the focus group discussion technique was employed when researching with children attending schools, mainly as they were located in formal settings within the school environments. This technique allowed children to interact with other school friends and this yielded different views that might not have been revealed through methods like in-depth interviews. With regards to adult participants, the in-depth individual techniques were used for community leaders, school representatives, oil companies and government representatives due to their sensitive positions while parents/carers were allowed to present their perceptions through focus group discussion to allow for more interaction.

Although, the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion techniques provided most of the empirical data, the use of direct observation and photography also provided interesting insights in the different study states. The use of photography and direct observations allowed us to illustrate disparities between different views. For instance, observing children walking on bare feet in the school environments in Rivers State and capturing children's emotions, facial expressions during the on-going verbal and non-verbal discussions in Delta State would simply be unavailable otherwise.

The methodological contribution of this thesis also has some implication for researchers. To researchers and academicians interested in researching with children, the study offers a rich methodologically understanding in representing children's voices especially in countries where the roles of government are significant in shaping children's experiences. By focusing on children whose perceptions have been systematically excluded from the spaces where they might otherwise have a voice, the study provides knowledge on the challenges of researching with children. Further, by considering children as unique and not a homogeneous group and by examining the narratives and lived worlds of children rather than the voices of adults acting 'on their behalf', this approach assists the researcher in understanding children's lives.

It is also important to researchers and academicians to note that it is not uncommon for non-western/majority world countries to have diverse ethnicity and language differences. While this heterogeneity may pose difficult problems for the researcher, understanding the social dimensions of community cultural heritage and how they influence the lives of people especially in rural communities is imperative to any study in these countries. This type of research also poses ethical challenges for researchers in conceptualising children's competences especially in communities in many parts of Africa, where tradition does not often permit children to express their opinions in front of adults. Nonetheless, it is suggested that researchers working with children should find ways of getting consent to allow children's opinions and experiences. This is because perceiving adult's voices as proxies for children's views in this type of study is unhelpful and will affect the results of the study

To this end, this study provides practical knowledge gained from qualitative data involving children within a multi-cultural ethnic region by showing that children actively constructed knowledge and were able to adapt with the methodology design. Additionally, the

experiences from relevant issues such as ethics, consent, legal system, diverse ethnicity and community leadership structures considered in the study may also helped to improve the understanding of researcher's working with children in rural African communities (see Section 4.10). Further, the influence of the power relations and research outcome of this study adds interest to ensuring an effective understanding of children with different backgrounds and experiences.

As noted in the methodology chapter of this study, the research has some limitations that may affect the interpretation of the results of the study such as language barriers and the confined age group (10-17 years of age) selected for the study. While it is valuable to acknowledge the research's limitations, it is important to add that this study achieved its objectives and yielded enough data to make the study relevant not only for the expansion of the frontiers of knowledge but for policy formulation and implementation.

Taken together, the methodological contributions of this thesis is that in utilising a combination of different techniques, this study was able to present the individuality and unique experiences of children and their voices on matters concerning them. The diverse methods employed also helped to elicit information on some of the complexities of children's lives in different tradition, and cultural dimensions of school and home environments.

8.3.3 Implication for Policy Makers

The issues surrounding the Niger Delta region particularly the oil pollution caused by oil exploration activities have been one of the main political issues faced by successive Nigerian government over the years. Yet, the vast majority of the literature gives only a partial account of how oil exploration activities have affected the people of the Niger Delta region, not least by only focusing on adult's voices. Therefore, this thesis offers a distinctive perspective by focusing on the voices of children who "metaphorically have no voice" (Alderson and Marrow 2004:7). The practical knowledge from this study also revealed that children are able to articulate their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and give informative responses to questions asked or being discussed. Thus, a key consideration of this study is the implication for policy makers regarding how best to generate well-informed decisions.

By exploring the existing body of research, this study argues that the federal government and oil companies have severely marginalised the impacts of oil exploration activities on children, particularly as children are the worst hit by the poverty resulting from oil exploration activities. While parents/carers have a role to provide children with basic needs, the role of providing an enabling environment for parents/carers to play their active roles is mainly a responsibility of policy makers. Another implication for policy makers is that although all Niger Delta States have enacted the CRA into law, findings show that the CRA still faces challenges of awareness, implementation and monitoring mainly as children in the study communities are unaware of its existence. More so, children's voices remain marginalised in decision-making processes on matters that concern them both at community and national levels. For instance, at the national level, oil company representative and the NDDC representatives indicated that child related programmes/projects are not often a target when addressing problems of the region.

This research suggests that any meaningful strategy for combating the problems of and enhancing the lives of the Niger Delta people must incorporate measures designed to enhance the voices of children and their participation in matters concerning them. Children's access to basic rights should be recognised and the damaging effect that oil production can have on children's lives should be taken into account in the evolution of a range of different polices. To assist high-level policy makers and practitioners in enhancing the lives of children, a 'Child Impact Assessment' (CIA) policy is also recommended.

8.4 Recommendations - CIA (Child Impact Assessment) Policy

Based on the insights collected from the study, the fundamental question is how the lives of children in the NDR can be improved. This study recommends a Child Impact Assessment Policy (CIA) policy that could be adopted to enhance government's and oil company's commitments in oil producing communities of the NDR. The primary consideration of the CIA policy is that children should be viewed as social actors and children's basic rights should be enhanced. For instance, policy makers should consider a remodelling of oil exploration policies with the best interests of the child as paramount. Other essential inclusions for a CIA policy are outlined below:

i) Oil companies should oversee the impacted areas of oil pollution and carry out adequate studies to access the impact of the oil pollution on children's access to basic needs such as clean water and healthy food. Children should also be well informed on the negative impacts of oil exploration activities and oil companies should design adequate strategies to help children cope with oil pollution.

ii) A complaints mechanism should be established to allow children channel their concerns to community and oil company representatives and all concerns. In addition, reports relating to poor access to children's basic rights should be taken seriously by the federal government and the oil companies and responded to appropriately.

iii) Children's participation should be included in decision-making on matters that concern them at national levels, local and community levels. When designing community projects, children should not be generalised as same, rather factors such as community type, children's ages, gender, and educational status should be considered

iv) The contents and benefits of the 2003 CRA, which has been enacted into law by all Niger Delta states, should be made available to children and the legal implication that exists with the Act. Oil companies should also ensure that all contractors are fully aware of company policy on children's rights, and are given training to ensure they act in accordance with ethical and basic principles.

v) A commitment by the federal government and oil companies should be made to improve children's access to education particularly in rural communities - this requires addressing the high costs of school fees/levies, problems associated with transportation to schools and improving teacher's salary package.

vi) Oil exploration regulations also need to develop a fair and adequate publicized compensation policy to families whose livelihoods have been affected by oil exploration activities especially women who are known to be the primary carers of children and consider establishing independently and professionally administered funds for this purpose.

vii) The CIA policy should be an independently funded regulatory body to monitor and verify the wellbeing of children in host communities. This should include sustainable strategies to provide for long-term access and arrangements for policy and procedures review. Additionally, the CIA policy should also be a mandatory

report of all oil and gas projects to ensure that oil companies and sub-contractors have children's interest in the Niger Delta region.

8.5   Directions for Future Research

As directions for future research, a replica of the study at different communities of the NDR would allow further assessment and enhance generalizability of the study. At the same time, future research should include factors affecting the lives of children outside those considered in this study such as voices of children below the ages of 10. Besides, due to the reduction in militant activities as a result of the Amnesty programme and the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry in 2008, future studies might consider any improvements on children's experiences and responses relating to these government interventions.

8.6   Chapter Summary

In spite of what is often reported about the impacts of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region, the practice has mainly presented adult's perceptions in relation to children's opinions, which are often under–valued, over looked or under reported. Considering this, this study has presented children's everyday lived experiences and the coping strategies adopted to deal problems associated with oil exploration activities in the study communities. The study showed the vital importance of listening to children's voices and the benefits of presenting their experiences as narrated by them.

The chapter has presented the key findings of the study and also demonstrated the study's contribution to knowledge and has made some policy recommendation by providing information on strategies that can enhance the lives of children in the region. Additionally, the chapter has indicated some directions for future research in the areas of researching with children in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

The main findings of the study have also shown that oil exploration activities have impacted negatively on children's overall wellbeing and children have often adopted some harmful coping strategies to deal with the incidences of problems such as oil spills and gas flares. Further, children's narratives have revealed that children are not 'passive' bearers of the society but competent 'active' social actors who support their families by generating income from different work activities in conditions of poverty and loss of livelihoods. In

particular, the study revealed that despite the adoption of the UN principles on children's rights and the promulgation of the 2003 Children's Rights Acts by all Niger Delta states, oil exploration activities have adversely affected children's access to basic rights such as access to clean water, access to healthy food, etc. Besides, the study have also shown that many of children have not benefitted from the oil wealth mainly as infrastructures such as education and health-care services remains a major problem in the rural communities.

While the thrust of this study is on children's voices, the perceptions of adult stakeholders at community and national levels have also been presented to explore children's lives and synthetize the discussions in the study. Thus, this chapter has demonstrated the key findings of the study in relation to children and adult's voices on children's perceived experiences of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region. The research established that children's opinions can differ significantly from adult's perceptions and it is not often helpful to assume that adults know what children want on matters concerning children. Finally, this study argues that any development policies for the Niger Delta region must recognise and integrate children's opinions on the impacts of oil exploration activities on their lives and examine how their concerns can be addressed.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Letter of Self Introduction

Norah Ijeoma Penawou

University of Loughborough

Geography Department

Leicestershire, UK. LE11 3TU

23 May 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Sir/Madam,

Request for Academic Interview

I am a doctoral candidate at Loughborough University working on the "Impacts of oil production on children in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria". I am currently on field trip for data collection to enable me write my thesis and your organization has been selected for an interview in order to generate the needed data. Kindly schedule a date at your earliest convenience for an interview with me, alternatively please send you answers via the e-mail. May I also add that your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be put into any other use than for academic purposes.

Yours faithfully,

Norah Penawou

Nigerian Contact Address:

> *1b Circular Road*
>
> *Opposite Presidential Estate*
>
> *Port-Harcourt, Rivers State*
>
> *Tel: 080333586455*

Appendix B: Data Collection Techniques

Appendix B1: In-Depth Interview Guide for Children Who Do Not Attend Schools (CNASs)

General Information

1. State located

2. Community

3. Local Government Area

4. Date of interview

Personal Characteristics

1. Name of the respondent

2. Sex of the respondent

3. Age of respondent

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Do you go to school? (Tell me if you have ever attended school. Explain why you stopped and who was funding it)

2. Can you tell me if you know of any scholarship programme? (Tell me about it. Tell me why you are not on scholarship.)

3. How many people live in your house including you? (What is the highest level of education attained by those in your house?)

4. Do you live with your parents or relatives? (Tell me who provides your basic needs. Probe for their contribution to providing income)

5. What can you say about your general to basic rights? (Probe for awareness of any legal document relating to children's rights)

6. Can you tell me what you know about your community and oil exploration activities? (Tell me if your community is presently producing oil? Explain.)

7. Do you know the name of any oil company in your community? (Do you know what they do?)

8. What can you say about the activities of NDDC and the federal government in your community? (Probe for development projects).

9. What do you think about the positive impacts of oil exploration activities? (Tell me about any development programmes)

10. What do you think about the negative impacts of oil exploration activities? (such as oil spills, gas flares, and waste discharge)

11. Tell me about the coping strategies adopted to deal with negative impacts if any.

12. Can you tell me what kind of activities you do? (For example, chores, fishing, farming, etc.)

13. Do oil exploration activities affect your activities in any way? (If yes, please tell me about your coping strategies)

14. In the case of any hazards relating to oil exploration activities, tell me who gives you information on what to do.

15. Do you know who communicates issues of problems associated with oil exploration activities to the oil company responsible? (If yes, tell me about the process)

16. Do you think your views are well represented when discussing negative impacts from oil exploration activities? (Please explain)

17. Are there places you avoid because of oil production activities? (Tell me about that.)

18. Do you think the oil resource in the community has enhanced your general well-being? (Please explain)

19. Tell me your favourite games and why you like it.

20. Have your expectations from the federal government and Oil Company been met? (Please explain)

21. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to explore in this interview?

Appendix B2: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Children Attending

Schools (CASs)

<u>General Information</u>

1. Name of school

2. State located

3. Community

4. Local government area

5. Date of interview

<u>Personal Characteristics</u>

1. Name of the respondent

2. Sex of the respondent

3. Age of respondent

<u>FGD Guide</u>

1. Can you tell me what kind of activities you do? (For example, chores, fishing, farming, etc.)

2. Do you live with your parents or relatives? (Tell me who provides your basic needs. Probe for their contribution to providing income)

3. What can you say about your access to basic rights? (Probe for awareness of any legal document relating to children's rights)

    Insight about their school

4. Do you pay school fees? (If you do, tell me who pays your school fees? If you do not - explain. Tell me if there are other school levies that you have to pay.)

5. Do you pay for your books and uniforms? (Explain.)

6. Are there any of you on scholarship? (Who is providing the scholarship and how long is it for?)

7. How do you get to school? (For example, car, bicycle, trekking, motor bike (okada), canoe etc.)

8. Can you tell me about facilities in your school? (Probe for access to water, electricity, library, etc.)

9. Tell me about the coping strategies adopted to deal with non-availability of school facilities where they exist.

10. Tell me about the quality of education in your schools (Probe for adequate number of teachers, etc.)

11. Can anyone tell me what he/she likes or dislikes about the school? (Probe for the state of their classrooms, chairs and the school environment.)

   Perceptions of Oil Exploration Activities

12. Can you tell me what you know about your community and oil exploration activities? (Tell me if your community is presently producing oil? Explain.)

13. Do you know the name of any oil company in your community? (Do you know what they do?)

14. What can you say about the activities of NDDC and the federal government in your community? (Probe for development projects).

15. What do you think about the positive impacts of oil exploration activities? (Tell me about any development programmes)

16. What do you think about the negative impacts of oil exploration activities? (such as oil spills, gas flares, and waste discharge)

17. Tell me about the coping strategies adopted to deal with negative impacts if any.

18. Can you tell me what kind of activities you do? (For example, chores, fishing, farming, etc.)

19. Do oil exploration activities affect your activities in any way? (If yes, please tell me about your coping strategies)

20. In the case of any hazards relating to oil exploration activities, tell me who gives you information on what to do.

21. Do you know who communicates issues of problems associated with oil exploration activities to the oil company responsible? (If yes, tell me about the process)

22. Do you think your views are well represented when discussing negative impacts from oil exploration activities? (Please explain)

23. Are there places you avoid because of oil production activities? (Tell me about that.)

24. Do you think the oil resource in the community has enhanced your general well-being? (Please explain)

25. Tell me your favourite games and why you like it.

26. Have your expectations from the federal government and Oil Company been met? (Please explain)

27. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to explore in this interview?

Appendix B3: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Parents/Carers in Study Communities

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General Information

1. State located

2. Community

3. Local government area

4. Date of interview

Participant Information

1. Names of participants

2. Gender of participants

3. Age of participants

FGD Guide

1. Who provides your children's basic needs? (Probe for children's contribution to family income)

2. What can you say about children's access to basic rights? (Probe for awareness of any legal document relating to children's rights)

3. Can you tell me what kind of work you do? (Tell me if you go fishing and/ or farming?)

4. Can you tell me what kind of work children are engaged in? (Probe for chores, fishing and/ or farming activities)

5. Can you tell me what you know about your community and oil exploration activities? (Tell me if your community is presently producing oil? Explain.)

6. Do you know the name of any oil company in your community? (Do you know what they do?)

7. What can you say about the activities of NDDC and the federal government in your community? (Probe for development projects).

8. Do you think oil exploration activities have positively impacted on children's well-being? (If yes please explain. Probe for development projects, scholarships, etc.)

9. Do you think oil exploration activities have negatively impacted on children's well-being? (Probe for impacts of oil spills, gas flares, waste discharge, etc.)

10. Please tell me what coping strategies children have adopted to deal with the negative impacts of oil exploration activities?

11. In the case of any hazards relating to oil exploration activities, tell me who gives children information on what to do.

12. Do you know who communicates issues of problems associated with oil exploration activities to the oil company responsible? (If yes, tell me about the process)

13. Do you think children's views are well represented when discussing negative impacts from oil exploration activities? (Please explain)

14. Are there places children avoid because of oil production activities? (Tell me about that)

15. Do you think the oil resource in the community has enhanced children's general well-being? (Please explain)

16. Tell me your children's favourite games and do you think oil exploration has impacted on it.

17. Have your expectations from the federal government and Oil Company been met? (Please explain)

18. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to explore in this interview?

Appendix B4: In-depth Interview Guide with Chiefs/Leaders in the Study Communities

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General Information

1. State located

2. Community

3. Local Government area

4. Date of interview

Participant Information

1. Names of participants

2. Gender of participants

3. Age of participants

Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. Giving the position you hold in this community, please tell me your role/function. (Explain.)

2. What do you do for a living? (Tell me if you engage in other activities such as fishing, farming, etc.).

3. How many people are in your household; including you? (Tell me the number of those below the ages of 18.)

4. What is the highest level of education attained by those in your household?

5. What can you say about children's access to basic rights? (Probe for awareness of any legal document relating to children's rights)

6. In this community, activities of oil production have been (or is being) witnessed. (Tell me about that. Probe for the name of the oil company. Probe for how people in the community respond to it?)

7. What can you say about the activities of NDDC and the federal government in your community? (Probe for development projects).

8. Do you think oil exploration activities have positively impacted on children's well-being? (If yes please explain. Probe for development projects, scholarships, etc.)

9. Do you think oil exploration activities have negatively impacted on children's well-being? (Probe for impacts of oil spills, gas flares, waste discharge, etc.)

10. Please tell me what coping strategies children have adopted to deal with the negative impacts of oil exploration activities?

11. Are there places children avoid because of oil production activities? (Tell me about that)

12. In the case of any hazards relating to oil exploration activities, tell me who gives children information on what to do.

13. Do you know who communicates issues of problems associated with oil exploration activities to the oil company responsible? (If yes, tell me about the process)

14. Do you think children's views are well represented when discussing negative impacts from oil exploration activities? (Please explain)

15. Do you think children have benefited from oil wealth?

16. Tell me your children's favourite games and do you think oil exploration has impacted on it.

17. Have your expectations from the federal government and Oil Company been met? (Please explain)

18. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to explore in this interview?

Appendix B5: In-depth Interview Guide for Schools Representatives

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General Information

1. Name of school:

2. Community where school is located:

3. Local Government Area where school is located:

4. State where school is located

5. Date of interview:

Personal Characteristics

1. Status of respondent:

2. Sex of the respondent:

3. Age of the respondent:

Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me how many students there are in this school?

2. How many teachers do you have?

3. What is the teacher-student ratio?

4. Are there teachers for every subject that students are enrolled for? (Explain. Are there teachers for Mathematics and English language?)

5. What is the average class size in your school?

6. Do students pay for school fees? (Tell me how much. Does the issue of school fees affect the number of students' size?)

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7. Are there students who are beneficiaries of any scholarship? (Whether state government, Oil companies, NDDC or even private sponsors?) (Tell me about that.) (Tell me what the scholarship covers. For example, tuition fees, books, school uniforms, etc.)

8. Can you tell me about facilities in the school? (Probe for access to water, toilets, electricity, library, etc.)

9. Tell me about the coping strategies adopted to deal with non-availability of school facilities where they exist.

10. Tell me about the quality of education in the schools (Probe for adequate number of teachers, etc.)

11. Tell me about the quality of school building (Probe for quality of classrooms)

12. Are there any impacts of Shell, NDDC or the federal government in the school? (Tell me about that. Probe for development projects)

13. Can you tell me about oil exploration activities in the community? (Tell the company responsible in the community.)

14. What can you say about the activities of NDDC and the federal government in your community? (Probe for development projects)

15. Are there any positive impacts of oil exploration activities on children's in the community? (Please explain)

16. Are there any negative impacts of oil exploration activities on children in the community? (Please explain)

17. Tell me about the coping strategies adopted by children to deal with negative impacts if any.

18. Do you think children have benefited from oil wealth?

19. Can you remember any issues with teachers that also affect students? (For example, teacher salaries, etc.)

20. What are your expectations from the oil companies, NDDC and the federal government concerning children in this school?

21. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to talk about in this interview?

Appendix B6: In-depth Interview Guide for Oil Company Representatives

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General Information

1. Name of oil company

2. State located

3. Communities where they operate (within the nine study communities)

4. Date of interview

Personal Characteristics

1. Sex of respondent

2. Position of respondent

Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. Does your company still have active production in the community (If yes, what is the daily production figure? If no, what was the daily production figure? Please tell me the reason for the stoppage)

2. Can you tell me about any developmental projects for host communities by your organisation? If you have, what age bracket is it meant to serve? Have people below the ages of 18 benefited from it?

3. Do you have any skill acquisition programmes or scholarship awards for people in the oil-producing communities? If you have, what age bracket is it meant to serve? Have people below the ages of 18 benefited from it? (Probe for benefits to children in Primary and secondary schools)

4. Are there any negative impacts of oil exploration activities on children in the communities? (Probe for impacts of gas flares, oil spills, waste effluent discharge, etc.)

5. Are there any warning signal/signs for children on environmental hazards in your areas of operations? How do you alert community members of any dangers, if any?

6. Have there been reported cases of child exposure to danger as a result of your company's activities? If yes, how has it been handled?

7. Is there any information by your organisation on how children can cope with negative impacts of oil exploration activities? (If yes, please explain)

8.   Do you have any contact person who liaises with community members on the effects of oil production in the host communities? What has been the positive and negative report from the community members? Tell me about your experiences.

9. What can you say about your company's commitment to enhancing children's access to access to basic rights? (Probe for awareness of any legal document relating to children's rights)

10. Does your company have children as participants in designing community projects? How do you incorporate the ideas of children in achieving you set objectives? How do you help to actualise the unmet expectations of children, if any?

11. Have there been any unmet expectations from the host communities by your organisation? Please tell me about it.

12. Do you think Niger Delta children have benefited from oil wealth?

13. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to talk about in this interview?

Appendix B7: In-depth Interview Guide for Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)

General Information

1. Name of development agency

2. State located

3. Date of interview

Personal Characteristics

1. Sex of respondent

2. Position of respondent

Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me about any developmental projects for rural communities of the Niger Delta region by your organisation? If you have, what age bracket is it meant to serve? Have people below the ages of 18 benefited from it?

2. Do you have any skill acquisition programmes or scholarship awards for people in the oil-producing communities? If you have, what age bracket is it meant to serve? Have people below the ages of 18 benefited from it? (Probe for benefits to children in Primary and secondary schools)

3. How does the organisation enhance children access to basic rights in the rural communities of the Niger Delta region where oil exploration activities take place? (Probe for awareness of any legal document relating to children's rights)

4. Have there been any unmet expectations from the host communities by your organisation? Please tell me about it.

5. Does you agency have children as participants? How do you incorporate the ideas of children in achieving you set objectives? How do you help to actualise the unmet expectations of children, if any?

6. What can you say about the performance of the oil companies in the Niger Delta region?

7. What can you say about the performance of the federal government in the Niger Delta region?

8. Do you think Niger Delta children have benefited from oil wealth?

9. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to talk about in this interview?

Appendix B8: In-depth Interview Guide for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO)

General Information

1. Name of NGO

2. State located

3. Local Government Area

4. Date of interview

Personal Characteristics

1. Sex of respondent

2. Position of respondent

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. What does your organisation represent?

2. What are its objectives?

3. Where does this organisation get its major funding from? Does it get any funds from the oil companies or the federal government? Tell me about it.

4. What age brackets are involved in your activities? Are children below the ages of 18 covered in your objectives? Tell me about it.

5. In what ways have this NGO contributed to enhancing children's access to basic rights?

6. In your opinion, are there positive impacts of oil exploration activities on children in the Niger Delta?

7. In your opinion, are there negative impacts of oil exploration activities on children in the Niger Delta?

8. Does you agency have children as participants? How do you incorporate the ideas of children in achieving you set objectives? How do you help to actualise the unmet expectations of children, if any?

9. What can you say about the performance of the oil companies on children's well-being in the Niger Delta region?

10. What can you say about the performance of the federal government on children's well-being in the Niger Delta region?

11. What can you say about the performance of state agencies like the NDDC on children's well-being in the Niger Delta region?

12. Do you think the Niger Delta children have benefited from oil wealth?

13. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to talk about in this interview?

Appendix B9: In-depth Interview Guide for UNICEF Representative

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<u>**General Information**</u>

1. State located

2. Local Government Area

3. Date of interview

<u>**Personal Characteristics**</u>

4. Sex of respondent

5. Position of respondent

<u>**Semi-Structured Interview Guide**</u>

1. What does your organisation represent?
2. What are its main objectives?
3. Where does this organisation get its major funding from? Does it get any funds from the oil companies or the federal government? Tell me about it.

4. What age brackets are involved in your activities? Are children below the ages of 18 covered in your objectives? Tell me about it.

5. In what ways have this NGO contributed to enhancing children's access to basic rights?

6. In your opinion, are there positive impacts of oil exploration activities on children in the Niger Delta?

7. In your opinion, are there negative impacts of oil exploration activities on children in the Niger Delta?

8. Does you agency have children as participants? How do you incorporate the ideas of children in achieving you set objectives? How do you help to actualise the unmet expectations of children, if any?

9. What can you say about the performance of the oil companies on children's well-being in the Niger Delta region?

10. Do you think the Niger Delta children have benefited from oil wealth?

11. What can you say about the performance of the federal government on children's well-being in the Niger Delta region?

12. What can you say about the performance of state agencies like the NDDC on children's well-being in the Niger Delta region?

14. Are there any issues that you would like to raise that you feel are important but that you haven't had a chance to talk about in this interview?