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POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT: ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PIPELINE VANDALIZATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The challenges of petroleum pipeline vandalization have become more frequent and very disturbing. This is due largely to the extent of human lives and properties that are lost due to such occurrences. The understanding here is that the perpetrators of these acts are mostly young persons who ordinarily belong to the active labour force but suffer from severe lack and want due to excruciating levels of poverty and unemployment. The economic situation in the country has gotten worse as the gap between the rich and the poor has widened. What has emerged across the country are agitated youths who desperately need to survive. With scarcity and hoarding of petroleum products and the flagrant increases in the prices of petroleum products coupled with the insensitivity on the part of government to the plight of the masses, people have resorted to unlawful acts to get what they want. This paper therefore examines the role government and organizations interested in ameliorating the sufferings of the masses must do to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment with the hope that it will help reduce petroleum pipeline vandalization and bring sanity to the society.

Introduction

There is a curious phenomenon that economists refer to as the “resource curse”. It appears that, on average, resource – rich countries have performed worse than those with smaller endowments – quite the opposite of what might have been expected. But not all rich countries have fared the same. Some 30 years ago, Indonesia and Nigeria had comparable per capita incomes, and both were heavily dependent on oil revenues. Today, Indonesia’s per capita income is four times that of Nigeria’s. Nigeria’s per capita income has actually fallen from US\$302.75 in 1973 to US\$254.26 in 2002 (Stiglitz, 2005).

Crude oil or Petroleum – the terms tend to be used interchangeably. Oil affects the environment in two main ways. It contributes to carbon dioxide (Co2) emissions; the increase in human – generated Co2 emission is generally regarded as a principal cause of global warming. Oil also contributes to general pollution, including acid rain, urban smog, marine pollution, reduced biodiversity, and the degeneration of various ecosystems. Petroleum resource affects the landscape, agricultural patterns, human health and activity. Energy use in general and petroleum use in particular contribute significantly to broad – based economic development with positive consequences for human health and happiness; but energy and oil also contribute to forms of pollution that lead to ill health, and local environmental degradation (Roberts, 2005).

Nigeria has a total network of 5,001 kilometers of oil pipelines, consisting of 4,315km of multi product pipelines and 666km of crude-oil pipelines. These pipelines criss-cross Nigeria and inter-link the twenty-two petroleum storage depots the refineries, the off-shore terminals and jetties. For safety and security reasons these pipelines are buried about one meter beneath the surface along 25 meters wide Right of Way (ROW) specifically acquired by Government for the purpose. Usually, the Petroleum Product Marketing Company (PPMC) and the Police provide surveillance to guard the pipeline.

Pipeline vandalization occurs when buried pipes are exposed and punctured unlawfully for the purpose of siphoning the content flowing through the pipelines. A pipeline may however, rupture due to such natural causes as wear and tear mainly from corrosion.

Oil pipeline vandalism has human, economic and environmental implications for the nation. It involves loss of lives and piles up more environmental damage. It causes a nation to incur financial losses and aggravates the vicious circle of poverty. In addition, these implications have multiplier and linkage effects as a vandalized pipeline in one part of the country may cause product scarcity in several parts of the country.

Critically speaking, there should not be any justification for vandalizing oil pipelines as it is through it that refined petroleum product are distributed nation wide. One cannot ignore its tragic consequences such as fire outbreak and death such as Ilado experience in Lagos of May 12, 2006 when over 200 people lost their lives, or the worse incidence so far recorded which occurred in October 1998 when over 1,000 people died in Jesse, Delta State from pipeline fire or the most recent which happened on December 26, 2006 at Abule- Egba area of Lagos State where over 600 persons died from pipeline fire explosion.

However, the petroleum sector is the main stay of the nation's economy and a major source of energy supply. Unfortunately, Nigeria is like a "paradox" because not only is it a rich country inhabited by very poor people, it also imports refined petrol despite its status as the sixth oil-producing nation in the world. The government owes it a duty to tell Nigerians all that has happened to the three refineries in the country – Port Harcourt, Kaduna and Warri refinery. Or why more refineries cannot be built in the country to take care of the constant scarcity, hoarding and price manipulation.

The Nigerian government is highly distracted and non responsive or accountable to the people. Nigeria is a rental state; hence, all the government does is collect rent from multi national corporations undertaking oil exploration and exploitation in the country. Importation of

petroleum products creates jobs for external countries hence one wonders if the petroleum sector in Nigeria is domestic oriented or externally oriented. One may also ask about those interested in buying the refineries in Nigeria. The truth is that they are not Nigerians, they only have Nigerian middlemen.

Therefore, all that the government does is manipulate the people, manipulate true supply of petroleum products so as to manipulate the price. What is more worrisome is that apart from the refined petrol imported into the country, Nigeria pumps over 2 million barrels of crude everyday. It is interesting to also ask, who gets oil block license? They are the ones around the patronage of government.

It is difficult to tell today if the discovery of oil in the 60s in Nigeria has been a blessing or a curse. This is because its discovery led to the gradual decline and eventual death of agricultural sector. There was no more plan for the diversification of the economy. Every opportunist in government saw crude oil as an avenue to have a share of the 'National Cake'. What happened to the Groundnut Pyramids and the cocoa processing boards? What happened to oil palm production and rubber processing etc. the Nigerian Currency which was as strong as British Pound Sterling in the 60s has become extremely weak and highly devalued as we have continuously remained as a primary producing country.

The resultant effect of this is that Nigeria has experienced growth without development with the creation of the Federal Capital City, Abuja as a good example. So much poverty, unemployment and insecurity across the country. This has been made worse especially in the Niger delta where the people have lost their farm lands to oil exploration and exploitation and on-shore pollution just as their rivers (aquatic life) has been lost to off shore pollution. The youths of the area cannot find jobs and are hardly hired by those who exploit their resources, just as compensatory measures for land lost by them are met with so much complexity and insincerity by those concerned especially the oil companies and the government which does not feel any moral obligation to the people.

We have a government that is not pro-active. What is happening to the 13% derivation due to the Niger Delta area? Right from the days of Isaac Boro to Ken Saro Wiwa and to Asare Dokuboh the struggle in the Niger Delta for survival in the midst of plenty has continued to grow worse. People are forced through unlawful acts hence over the year's series of vandalization of petroleum pipelines have been recorded with very severe effects. From Jesse to Ejigbo to Ikale to Ilaje the story has been the same. So much lives and properties lost. The most recent Abule-Egba pipeline vandalization of December 26, 2006 in which an estimated 600 people lost their lives was attributed to the fact that people needed petrol for their survival especially during the festive period. A hungry and unemployed man would do anything to attain a level of survival.

Poverty and Its Dimensions

Every scholar working in the field of poverty or development issues agrees that poverty denotes an undesirable state, which means that individuals or groups in such a state need improvement in their situation. It should be noted that there is no agreement on methodology, approach, measurement, description and definition of the concept; it is however believed that poverty is an undesirable social problem to which a solution should be found (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000).

There are different approaches adopted at defining and measuring poverty. In this paper, three major approaches are discussed: the income/expenditure approach, the basic needs approach and the capacity approach. In other words poverty has many dimensions and it has to be looked at through a variety of indicators –levels of income and consumption, social indicators, indicators of vulnerability to risks and of social/political access.

The income /expenditure approach defines as poor any individual whose income/expenditure level falls below a given threshold. On the basis of this, the World Bank distinguishes absolute poverty from relative poverty. Absolute poverty exists when income/expenditure of an individual is less than 1US\$per day. Relative poverty views poverty in the context of the overall standard of living that prevails in a particular society.

The basic needs approach goes beyond income to incorporate the availability of basic human needs such as access to food, housing, clean water, educational facilities and health care. This approach also encompasses socio-economic indicators of well being such as high rates of morbidity and mortality, prevalence of malnutrition, illiteracy, high infant and maternal mortality rates, low life expectancy, poor quality housing, inadequate clothing, low per capita income and expenditure, poor infrastructure (electricity, communication, transport, road and other social services) and lack of access to basic services such as safe water and food. These features can be used to identify poor and nonpoor individuals, households and societies. An individual, household or group found to be characterised by some or all of these features can be described as being poor

The capacity approach sees poverty as involving deprivation of opportunities for a fulfilling life. The indicator would normally include a measurement of the extent to which individuals and groups are deprived and excluded from economic and/or social rights privileges. A more encompassing description of poverty was given by The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2001), in its statement on poverty, it was defined as “a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.” This definition has therefore given a more embracing definition, which the income or basic necessity approach has failed to give.

Saunders (2004) contends that “any poverty measure must include two key ingredients of poverty – the idea that resources are inadequate to meet basic needs and the notion that needs can only be defined relative to prevailing community attitudes and standards.”

Unemployment in Nigeria

Getting a definition that is devoid of disagreement among scholars has been a difficult task (Adebayo,1999) Unemployment is defined as a state in which people who can work are without jobs and are seeking for pay or profit.

Any useful analysis of nigeria’s unemployment data is very difficult, if not impossible. the difficulty arises from the highly unreliable data sourcing process in the country. Between 1990 and 1999, unemployment rate averaged 2.92%, with the highest being 3.5% for 1990 and the lowest 1.8% for 1995. fairly realistic estimates have been collected since 2000 through 2002. the average for the period is 14.67%, with 2000 rate being 18.1%.

Table 1: Unemployment Rate in Nigeria

YEAR	COMPOSITE %	URBAN %	RURAL %
1990	3.5	5.9	3.0
1991	3.4	4.9	2.7
1992	3.4	4.8	3.2
1993	2.7	3.8	2.5
1994	2.0	3.2	1.7
1995	1.8	3.9	1.6
1996	2.9	4.6	2.5
1997	3.2	6.0	2.6
1998	3.2	4.8	2.8
1999	3.1	5.8	2.5
2000	18.1	14.2	19.8
2001	13.7	10.3	15.1
2002	12.2	19.5	13.3

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, Nigeria

To put the unemployment situation in the country in proper perspective, other reliable statistical indices could serve as guides. Between 1970 and 1990, average capacity utilization in the manufacturing sector fell from 85.2% to 40.3%. The rate further fell to 39.6% in 2001 from 42% in 1991. Though employment rose in the manufacturing sector from 129,032 in 1970 to 335,179 employees in 1985, by 1992, it has reduced to 20,153. Between 1994 and 1998, job vacancies declared dropped significantly from 9,893 to 8,291 for the lower grade workers and from 3,731 to 3,670 for workers of the professional and executive categories (abstract of statistics, 2001:345). Though there was a decrease in the number of registered unemployed people from 96,121 in 1994 to 89,759 in 1998, the fall can be explained by the fact that sustained unemployment discourages the unemployed from doing fresh registration. Otherwise, such a fall is incompatible with the shrinking number of declared job vacancies.

Unemployment has been put forward as a major factor in a culture that encourages behaviour considered anti-social by the larger society. Such behaviours include petty trading, casual work, borrowing, stealing, pick pocketing, touting and other illegal activities, which also include pipeline vandalization. Linking poverty to pipeline vandalization and related incidences, Shokunbi (2006) writes:

Mass unemployment and under-employment, an uncaring government and a sense of hopelessness and injustice combine to form a highly volatile and combustible concoction that flares up in different forms—hostage takings, kidnappings, pipeline vandalism, riots and religious intolerance.

History and Causes of Pipeline Vandalisation

According to O'Neill (2007) The Niger Delta holds some of the world's richest oil deposits, yet Nigerians living there are poorer than ever, violence is rampant, and the land and water are fouled. What went wrong? Visions of prosperity rose with the discovery of oil in 1956 in the

Niger Delta, and by mid 1970, Nigeria had joined OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and the government's budget bulged with petro-dollars. Where does the Oil money go? That question is asked in every village, town and city in the Niger Delta. The blame spreads, moving from the Oil companies to a bigger more elusive target; the Nigeria government.

Pipeline explosions and vandalization are not new in Nigeria. Hardly any year ever passes since Oil was discovered in Nigeria in 1956 that one does not hear one breaking news or the other of pipeline explosion. Why do people who have heard about the dangers of being close to a vandalized pipeline choose to put their lives at risk for a couple of jerry cans of gasoline. Could it be Poverty, Unemployment, Greed or Stupidity? What ever the real reason, one thing is clear. People who choose to obtain fuel from vandalized pipelines act on instinct. They see it as God sent gift and instinctively think they have a right to it due to their poor economic conditions. And so, under such circumstance, commonsense gives way to foolishness (Chippla, 2006). In fact, if a pipeline vandalization takes places today some people will certainly go there to scoop for fuel in spite of the obvious dangers to life.

The list of pipeline disasters in Nigeria since 1998 include: the very recent pipeline explosion of December 26, 2006 in Abule-Egba area of Lagos State which killed over 600 people with hundreds seriously injured. Other cases as stated by USATODAY.com include:

- May 12, 2006. In the Lagos area, over 200 people lost their lives in an explosion as villagers, scavenged for fuel from a ruptured pipeline.
- December 22, 2004: 27 died as villagers tried to take fuel from a damaged pipeline in Ilado area of Lagos.
- September 16, 2004: A pipeline exploded near Lagos as thieves tried to siphon fuel, killing as many as 60 people.
- June 19, 2003: 125 people killed by a pipeline explosion in the village of Ovirn in Abia State, where they were trying to collect petrol.
- September 29, 2002: Several people died and many more are injured at Akute- Odo in Southern Ogun State as a pipeline blow up after they vandalized it to pilfer oil.
- November 5, 2001: 15 people died and several sustained several burns in a pipeline blow up caused by an Oil leak at Umudike, in the Southern stem State of Imo.
- November 30, 2000: About 60 people are killed when a damaged pipeline explodes near the port of Lagos where hundreds of people were illegally collecting fuel.
- July 23, 2000: At least 40 are killed when a pipeline blows up at Aforkpe village near Sapele. 15 more died the next day in a second blast in the same area.
- July 11, 2000: Nearly 300 people died at Warri, Delta State in a fire caused by a pipeline explosion as they were illegally collecting fuel.
- June 21, 2000: 28 people died in a fire caused by a pipeline explosion at Okue Ijeba, near the Southern Warri Oil field.
- March 20, 2000: At least 50 are burnt alive when a pipeline blows up near Isioma, in Southeastern Abia state.
- February 7, 2000: 17 died in a fire started at a pipeline near Ogwe, in the Eastern part of Abia State.
- June 25, 1999: 15 people are burnt alive in a pipeline explosion at Akue- Odo in Southern Nigeria.
- October 18, 1998: 1,082 people died and hundreds were injured at Jesse, in the Southeastern State of Delta, in a pipeline explosion.

This issue was also reported by the Punch of December 27, 2006 with the caption 700 burnt to death in Lagos, 69 rescued; mass burial for victims. The Guardian also reported on December 27, 2006: Hundreds die in Lagos Pipeline fire. Also a victim stated: "If we don't scoop fuel from here, hunger will kill us. If we die from explosion here, it is still death out of want. We might as well stay here, scoop and hope to survive". (A few minutes later the explosion). According to Akinleye (2006) while pipeline vandalism and fuel theft are common in Nigeria, industry experts estimate that about 5% of the country's crude oil production is stolen for export by big syndicates with contacts in the military and government. The impoverished people of Nigeria often tap pipelines, seeking fuel for energy use or resale on the black market. Nigerian militants have continuously kidnapped foreign oil workers to press their demands for local control of oil revenues by inhabitants of the oil producing south, who feel cheated out of the wealth produced in their backyards. Other groups have used kidnappings as bargaining chips to prod oil companies to create or increase jobs or improve benefits.

Theoretical Framework

To be able to place this paper in proper perspective, two theories have been put forward to explain poverty and unemployment and their manifestation in Nigeria and how this has affected pipeline vandalization. These theories include:

- i) Structural strain theory
- ii) Culture of Poverty

Structural strain theory

Man's social desires are innate and insatiable and this is necessarily limited and controlled by forces exterior to himself. This regulating force was "collective order" (traditional rules) of society which defined and ordered goals to which men should orient their behaviour. If this regulatory force was disrupted or disturbed (as in situation of sudden economic change), men's aspirations would be released without control. Hence, Deviant acts or acts that go against normal expectation are likely in a situation where man's aspirations no longer match the possibility of fulfilment (Otite and Ogionwo, 1999)

Merton (1968) in his Social Theory and Social Structure analyzed the situation where there is exceptional emphasis on common success goals for the population at large while the social structure rigorously restricts or completely closes access to approved modes (legitimate means) of reaching these goals of considerable part of the same population. This dysfunction of goals and means result in conflict which may be adapted to in any of the following ways:

- (i) Conformity (accepts both goals and legitimate means)
- (ii) Innovation (accepts goals and rejects legitimate means)
- (iii) Ritualism (rejects goals but accepts legitimate means)
- (iv) Rebellion (substitutes new goals and new means)

What determines the particular response (both legitimate and illegitimate) to structural strain is the level of opportunity available to the individual in his sub-culture. This theory clearly typifies the situation in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta region where the people have completely

lost faith in the Government and Oil companies and can not see any sincerity or commitment on the part of Government towards resolving the problems of poverty and unemployment. Consequently, the people have resorted to rebellious acts such as pipeline vandalization and kidnapping of Expatriate oil workers with a view to using such to press home their demands for compensation, social justice, progress and adequate provision of social amenities.

The Culture of Poverty

According to Pakulski and Waters (1996) the culture of poverty exists when people choose a poverty stricken lifestyle rather than adopt such a lifestyle due to lack of money. Researchers over the years have noted that the lifestyle of the poor differs in certain respects from that of other members of society. Also that poverty lifestyles in different societies share common characteristics. The circumstances of poverty are similar, in many respects, in different societies. Similar circumstances and problems tend to produce similar responses, and these responses can develop into a culture that is learned, shared and socially transmitted behaviours of a social group. This line of thinking has led to the concept of a "Culture of Poverty" (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

The idea of a culture of poverty was first introduced by the American Anthropologist, Oscar Lewis in the 1950s. He developed the concept from his fieldwork among the urban poor in Mexico and Puerto Rico. Lewis argued that the culture of poverty is a design for living which is transmitted from one generation to the next. As a design for living which directs behaviour, the culture of poverty has the following elements.

- i. On the individual level, its major characteristics are a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependence and inferiority, a strong present-time orientation with relatively little ability to defer gratification, a sense of resignation and fatalism.
- ii. On the family level, life is characterized by: free union or consensual marriages, a relatively high incidence of abandonment of mothers and children. These are high rate of divorce and desertion by the male family head resulting in matrifocal families headed by women.
- iii. On the community level, there is lack of effective participation and integration in the major institutions of the larger society.

Therefore in Nigeria the feeling of government against acts of vandalization of the masses is that the culture of poverty is a response by the poor and unemployed to their place in society. In other words, the culture of poverty goes beyond a mere reaction to a situation. It takes on the form of culture because its characteristics are guides to actors that are internalized by the poor and passed on from one generation to the next. As such, the culture of poverty tends to perpetuate poverty, since its characteristics can be seen as mechanisms that maintain poverty: attitude of fatalism and resignation lead to acceptance of the situation. Therefore, to the government, no matter how positive its policies are, due to the culture of poverty, some people will still think poor and act poor.

Strategies Towards Reducing Poverty and Unemployment in the Country

In a bid to help arrest the continuous vandalization of pipelines in the country, especially in the Niger Delta, the government under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo set up the

Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to address the developmental needs of the people and bring sustainable prosperity and peace to the area.

Consequently, since year 2000 a number of projects have been executed such as road maintenance and construction, building of classrooms in some schools, hospitals, electricity and water. Yet, the people are hungry as poverty is increasing in the land. The real needs of the people have not been met as such projects executed were hardly ever done in consultation with the people. In addition, majority of the communities are still basking in the highest levels of squalor and misery as they have witnessed no form of developmental effort from the Government and the Companies involved with oil exploitation and pollution in the area. What then must be done is the crux of the matter.

The NDDC holds some promise in the transformation of the Niger Delta region. It must not end up like OMPADEC established in 1992 which failed in its bid to develop the area as it was engulfed in interference by then Military Government of General Ibrahim Babangida as this encouraged and promoted corruption. The NDDC as a matter of huge priority must attend to the social and economic neglect of the Niger Delta so as to meet the expectations of the people which will lead to peaceful transformation of the area. The Government at all levels, Federal, State and Local Government must have listening ears to the pains and cries of the people and must therefore go back to the drawing board and design other strategies towards meeting the needs of the Niger Delta people just as it also attends to the generality of the masses in the country as this will help tackle poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. Government must show enough commitment and sincerely to purpose and also discourage corrupt practices in all its entirety.

The Government must ensure transparency in administration so as to carry the entire populace along in the Nigeria Project. Government must go down to the grassroots, the hinterland to find out what the needs of the people are and how best to ameliorate them.

Government must make vigorous efforts towards job creation and entrepreneurial activities for the people. The right methods and personnel that will implement this and make a success out of it must be consulted by the Government.

The Oil Companies themselves must adequately give back to the communities from which so much wealth has been attained. The needs of the people in terms of amenities and facilities or infrastructures must be attended to such as roads, schools, health needs, industries, electricity, pipe borne water etc. The youths of the area must be given priority in terms of employment opportunities and they must be encouraged to go to school through various scholarship programmes. Also, due to the topography of the land, development efforts in the Niger Delta area are more expensive to handle. So Government must ensure that the 13% derivation and perhaps even more is given to the region to guarantee the execution of capital projects. The community leaders also have a role to play in ensuring that peace and stability return to the Niger Delta area of the country. They must show a high sense of discipline and integrity in the handling of the resources that come to the area by not taking undue advantage of the people. They must be open and democratic enough to carry everyone along in the struggle towards a more peaceful and prosperous society for all.

Conclusion

The consequences of Oil pipeline vandalization may be categorized as economic, human and environmental which are often very devastating. To ameliorate the situation, the past neglect, marginalization and oppression in the country, especially in the Niger Delta which have been worsened by widespread poverty and unemployment must no longer be ignored. If the situation is left unattended to, there will be more drastic calls for resource allocation/control and restructuring of the Federation which may escalate and jeopardize the continued corporate existence of the country.

People must be sensitized, uninformed and oriented about consequences of such vandalization because repairs are far more difficult to handle than the initial installation. Innocent people are affected, assets are lost with heavy cost implications indeed the effect of pipeline vandalization is a lesson for the living to be law abiding. But the insensitivity on the part of the Government to the plight of the masses must stop. Inadequate response to distress calls as observed from the police, fire service and the agencies of the government in charge of rescue operations must not be encouraged. Government must show a high sense of responsibility to the plight of the masses.

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