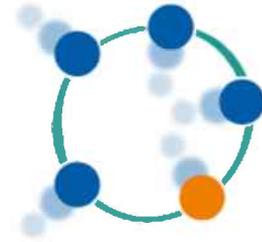


Environmental Justice in Nigeria: Reflections on the Shell-Ogoni Uprising, Twenty Years Afterwards



Author: Sobrasuaipiri, Sobomate

Institution: University of Brighton
Geography and Geology

Address: School of Environment and Technology
Moulsecoomb
Brighton
BN2 4GJ
United Kingdom

Email: S.Sobrasuaipiri1@uni.brighton.ac.uk

Abstract

Environmental and Social Justice Movement in Nigeria came to the fore when the Ogoni people issued the 'Ogoni Bill of Right' in 1990 to the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). The issuance and public declaration of this document has changed the socioeconomic and political landscape of the Ogoni people, and the entire Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The drive for the implementation of the Ogoni Bill of right resulted into a struggle for hegemony between the Ogoni people and the FGN; which eventually degenerated to the impasse that saw the forceful expulsion of Shell and all its operations from Ogoni land in 1993. Much attempts have been made to understand the cause of the Ogoni uprising, however, less is known on the implications of this declaration. This article employed secondary materials to examine the implications of the Ogoni uprising. By reflecting on the evolution of the Shell Ogoni uprising, focusing on the socioeconomic, political and environmental demands of the Ogoni people within the last two decades. This article highlights the remote cause of the prolonged crises between the Ogoni people, Shell and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). The article suggests that what the Ogoni people have undergone, in the past twenty years has brought about a political transformation in the area; a position that has given them a diminutive political respite. Although, the minor political gains is yet to be transformed as a means to alleviate the socioeconomic and environmental conditions of the entire Ogoni region, as the area remains as some of the most deprived region in the entire Niger Delta. Whilst, recognition is given to the collectively effort made by the Ogoni people in their campaign for environmental and social justice, the lack of feasible implementable policy approach on the part of the Federal Government of Nigeria still put the Ogoni people and their region in a conceding position after more than two decades of their campaign. This outcome questions the seriousness of the FGN especially on how they (FGN) handle demands made by minority ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Keywords

Environmental Justice, Uprising, Ogoni Bill of Right, Niger Delta

1. Introduction

The dispute between the Ogoni people, Shell and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) came to the fore when the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), a group that represents a vast majority of the Ogoni people issued the "Ogoni Bill of Right" to the FGN in 1990. The "Ogoni Bill of Rights" is a document presented to the Government of Nigeria which demanded for the local autonomy of the resources entrenched in Ogoni land. The request placed emphasis on the control of all Ogoni affairs by the Ogoni people themselves such as; control and use of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, adequate and direct representation of right for Ogoni people in all Nigerian national institutions and the right to protect the Ogoni environment (Saro-wiwa, 1990). The bill has a twenty point demands summated into four key areas; environmental, political, economic and social emancipation of the Ogoni people. The conflict began with a non-confrontational and nonviolent agitation by MOSOP against the degradation of the Niger Delta area (Omoyefa, 2010). During this period, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria otherwise known as Shell was caught in this dispute, and was forcefully ejected from all Ogoni communities. The overall outcome of these events has had a huge impact in the Niger Delta, with lasting implications that have shaped the modus of environmental and social justice discourses in Nigeria.

Oil was first discovered in Olobiri community currently in Bayelsa State, Niger Delta, part of Nigeria in 1956 by Shell-British Petroleum (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, 2013). The oil boom of the 1970s led Nigeria to neglect its strong agricultural and light manufacturing bases in favour of a dependence on crude oil. Oil revenues comprise nearly 75 % of budgetary revenues and 95% of exports in Nigeria (Litwack, 2013). Since the discovery of oil in commercial quantities, the government has realized more than \$600 billion dollars from oil (Allen, 2012). More recently within a two year period (2009 to 2011) the government has earned a total revenue of \$143.5 billion from equity crude sales, royalty, signature bonuses and taxes from oil proceeds (Mitee, 2013). The discovery of oil has however, also brought about some of the issues that have threatened the existence of Nigeria since its independence from British rule in 1960. This is so, because, much as oil remains the mainstream of Nigerian foreign earnings, the management and distributive politics associated with the resource has also hindered the socioeconomic, political, and environmental development of the people and the area where this resource is extracted from, as the huge earnings accrued from the sale is yet to be utilized as a means to improve the living conditions of the people. This is, as the people, and the region remains one of the most disadvantaged in Nigeria.

To this point, academic attentions have been given to some of the growing issues that have originated from the oil producing region in Nigeria. For example, Omotosola, (2006) described the environmental situation in Niger Delta, Nigeria as an "Environmental Apocalypse". The term framed

to highlight the cumulative impact of oil pollution, and gas flaring in the Niger Delta area. Watts, (2004) believe that the best way to describe the issues plaguing the oil rich region was to label the region a "Resource Curse"-meaning a region endowed with resources, still remain the least developed. He coined the term to also best describe the lack of political willpower, and the continued averseness of the Nigerian government in tackling the protracted environmental and socioeconomic challenges confronting the oil producing regions of the Niger Delta. Continuing this theme of government as a source of the challenges in Niger Delta region, Osaghae, (1995) believes that the control of political power by people of other regions (in this case the Northern part of Nigeria) was a deliberate strategy to dispossess people from regions such as the (Niger Delta) from access to and control of resources within their own territory. Faulting the issues of federalism contained in the constitution of Nigeria which allows for the control of all resources by the central government, Osaghae, (1995) argued that it was a deliberate deed to further deny the local communities access to their resources. An outcome that has impacted negatively on oil producing communities, especially the Niger Delta region where the people have had to deal with the environmental pollutions, whereas the proceeds of the resource extracted is taken to develop other parts of the country to the detriment of the region.

Local communities across the globe have been faced with displacement, dispossession, and exposure to risks due to industrialisation and development (Howitt, 2001). As local communities become more informed about their rights to access, power over, and control of the resources within their localities, it has consistently increased the cases of resistance between them (local communities) and the key actors involved in natural resource extraction. The increase in such cases calls for concern, and as such should spur more active studies that will enhance collaborative conflict resolution strategies globally, as there is a strong link between natural resource management and conflict (Wood, 1993). This article reflects critically on these points in relation to the current discourses relevant to the Ogoni uprising, by considering the demands, and the implications of the twenty points "Ogoni Bill of Right" document presented to FGN more than two decades ago.

2. Study area

The true origin of the Ogoni people is not well known, with claim that they migrated from Ghana and settled in the Southern part of the area (Agbonofo, 2009). Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests the Ogoni have inhabited the Niger Delta for more than 500 years (UNPO, 2009). They (Ogonis) are among the several ethnic minorities in River State Nigeria, which occupy a territory of approximately 404 square miles, which forms the part of the Eastern Niger Delta, between the Imo River on the East and North. The area lies between latitudes 4.05 and 4.20 North and longitudes 7.10 and 7.30 East (Agbonofo, 2009). The total land area of Ogoni is approximately 1000km² containing

nearly up to 116 drilled oil wells and 5 flow stations with a flow station capacity of 185,000 barrels of oil per day (Tanee, and Albert, 2011).

The Ogoni population is approximately 832,000 (Nigerian Population Commission, 2010). Because of their agricultural economy and an increasing population, most of the rainforest that once covered the area has been altered or removed for farming, which has over the years caused larger Ogoni villages to grow together and form towns, some of which are as large as 10,000 people. Ogonia land is made up of six kingdoms - Babbe, Eleme, Gokana, Ken-Khana, Nyo-Khana and Tai - with four different although related languages, and is united under one town Bori, which is the capital. Despite Christianisation, many aspects of Ogoni indigenous culture and religion are still evident that they have their own distinct culture, in which land was traditionally seen as a god and worshipped. Similarly, the Ogoni people have a tradition and custom that is deeply rooted in nature and this helped them to protect and preserve the environment for generations. The land on which they live and the rivers which surround them are viewed by them not just as natural resources for exploitation but with deep spiritual significance (Lagbosi, 2007).

Shell is a multinational oil company with its major operations located in the Niger Delta part of Southern Nigeria. The majority of Shell's onshore operations in Rivers State are located within the Ogoni land in the state. Shell is the largest oil and gas company in Nigeria, their operations spreads over 30,000 square kilometres, network of more than 9,000km of flow lines and pipelines, 71 producing oil field, approximately 1,000 producing wells, 87 flow stations, nine gas plants and two major oil terminals with a capacity to produce an average of over one million barrels of oil equivalent per/day (Shell, 2012a).



Figure 1 Map Showing Ogoniland in Rivers State, Nigeria, (source:BBC,2012)

Shell accounts for 40% of the country's oil production, and 53% of Nigeria's hydrocarbon reserve base operating a joint venture involving the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), which holds 55%, Shell (30%), Elf (10%) and Agip (5%) (Ite, 2004). However, some of these operations are accompanied with consequences that have devastating effects on the communities where these facilities are located affecting not only the socio-economic well-being of the communities, but in some cases environmentally as well, especially when there are incidences of oil spill. An internal report from Shell suggests that in 2006-2011 the company recorded up to 820 cases of oil spillage, which amounted to approximately 295,000 barrels of crude oil spilled (Shell, 2012b). Pollution incidences have resulted in loss of properties and in some cases displacement of individuals without little or no compensations (Howitt, 2001). It is on this back drop (amongst others) that the people of Ogoni staged a peaceful protest against Shell (the major operators of oil field in Ogoni land) and the government of Nigeria challenging the environmental degradation of their lands, and the reason behind the socio-economic and political marginalisation of the people from their clime since the inception of the extraction of oil and gas activities in their region. It is suggest that in Ogoni only few households have electricity and only one doctor available to per 100,000 people in the communities, with 85% unemployment rate (Watts, 2004).

The failures of the Nigerian state to improve the living conditions of the people within the oil producing communities have lowered the expectations of the people, especially the Ogoni's and the entire Niger Delta region where the bulk of the oil is produced. Consequently, the lack of the federal government to come up with feasible intervention strategies geared towards improving the living

conditions of the people, and the region has given rise to the number of militia group that has originated from the region (Augustine, 2006). The Ogoni's are an example of oil producing communities that have witness negative effects of an burden oil dependent nation.

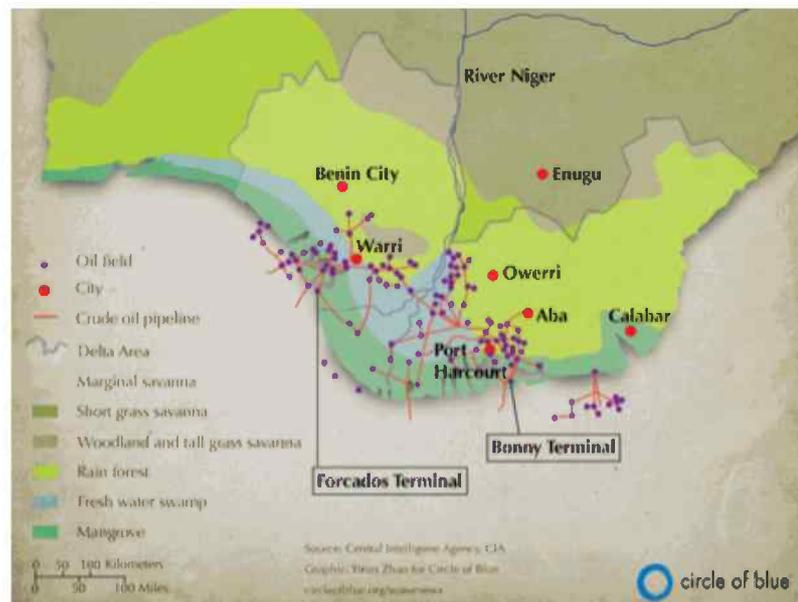


Figure 2 Map Showing oil and gas installation in Niger Delta (Source: FuelNews, 2012)

The consistent exploration of oil and gas activities in Ogoni has exposed the land and the inhabitants to series of devastating environmental issues. With less attention given to the environment, or the people of the region; making the Ogoni people to engage the FGN in a battle of control in contestation of their level marginalization. This encounter has (not until) recently included robust concerns for the environmental devastation of the region. Suffering series of such environmental degradation and pollution, the Ogoni's have sought more political autonomy and compensation for the damages done to their environment due to the activity of oil and gas exploration.

3. Conceptualising Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice (EJ) is widely used in academia to depict methods local people use to challenge any identified environmental anomalies meted at them. The EJ is formulated in the USA in the 1980s. It refers to the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws (Bass, 1998). Principally from an American democracy that combines civil rights with environmental protection which demands that those who have historically

been excluded from environmental decision making, traditionally minority, low-income, and tribal communities, have the same access to environmental decision makers, decision-making processes, and the ability to make reasoned contributions to decision-making process as any other individuals (Bass, 1998). Emerged in 1982 when black citizens lay down on the road to stop the government from dumping 120 million pounds of soil contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls in Warren County, North Carolina (Shelker and Miller, 2006). Although, unsuccessful in halting the landfill construction, the Warren County demonstrations marked the first time that African Americans mobilized a national broad-based coalition in response to an impending environmental threat (Cutter, 1995).

As the EJ concept gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s, several groups emerged in the USA to oppose perceived inequities in the distribution of environmental hazards, based on the assumptions of a threat to the public health of the nearby community (Bullard, 1983; Bowen, & Wells, 2002). The early emergence of Environmental Justice concept was also very geographical (Walker and Bulkeley, 2006). At its early stages, it was regularly applied as a tool in the activism movements, and researchers mainly focused it on the relationship between race and poverty (Walker, 2012). However, having a conceptual root in theories of social and political power, and social movements, it places priority on race, gender and culture which distinguishes the movement from the traditional political economy critiques of capitalism (Byrne *et al*, 2009). The application of the concept has currently shifted spatially from the United State of America (of its origin) to nearly every part of the globe whilst still retaining the focus of its grass root activism with varied research interest, ranging from deprivation, class, income gender and indigenous people. For example, EJ concepts was applied as an environmental movement by the *Evenki* people to oppose a pipeline project that the community perceived would have had an adverse effect on their environment and traditional activities (Yakovleva, 2011).

Some of the initial academic considerations of EJ concepts were focused on the existence of inequity in the distribution of environmental ills. Recently, there have been some extensions of the EJ concepts to include studies where the environment and nature are used as factors to make the conditions for social justice (Schlosberg, 2013). This paradigm shift of EJ as concepts explored to questioning inequality, participation, and access to one of policy framing has recently been stressed. Such that the principles of EJ concept have, as a consequence, begin to be featured within policy rhetoric and the work of mainstream institutions operating in varied places and at different scales of governance (Walker and Bulkeley, 2006). Similarly, this shift of the concept from the discussions of distribution, participation and recognition to that of a more globalised tool for policy and sustainable development has also gain acceptance. For example, in the UK the EJ concept has been employed by

environmental activists and policy makers to push for a more social inclusive and sustainable society (Agyeman and Evans, 2004), making the concept increasingly becoming a tool of reconciling the sustainable development agenda with that of social justice, which has been noted to be expressed within government by the Environment Agency (Bulkeley & Walker, 2007).

Holifield, Porter, and Walker, (2009) show a growing body of research that attempts to interpret environmental justice activism in the context of critical theory. Their review highlights an emergence of two overlapping and intersecting EJ concepts; the generation of spaces of environmental inequality, and the analysis of the meanings of *environmental justice* as a discursive frame for activism, policy, and research. Whilst Taylor, (2000) used social movement theory to analyse EJ rhetoric, by arguing that the EJ frame is a 'Master' frame that uses (racism, injustice and environmentalism) discourses as an effective mobilising tool. He also identified that Environmental Justice Paradigm (EJP) has been used in the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) to amplify or clarify the connections between environment and social justice.

Debates on the term and how best to conceptualise the EJ frame have also generated some attention. Schlosberg, (2007) questioned the meaning of 'justice' of environmental justice, whilst stating that justice itself is a concept with multiple integrated meanings. He argued that the 'justice' demanded by global environmental justice (recognition, distribution and participation) are currently applied out of the original frameworks that underscore the preferences of the 'justice' in the EJ frame. On the other hand, challenging the spread of EJ theories Reed and George, (2011) highlight how Environmental Justice research has remained firmly rooted in the United States alone with focus on the distributional aspects of environmental harms. Whilst Agyeman, (2010) believed that currently in the USA, scholars have succeeded in dividing the EJ concepts into two primary arenas; the 'persistent activism', and the 'racial intent' used mostly in litigations, rather than using it to represent the activism movement.

4. The Ogoni-Shell Uprising in Perspective

The origins of the conflict between the Ogoni people and Shell date back to the discovery of oil in this part of the Niger Delta in 1958 when Nigeria was still under British colonial rule, and the Ogoni, like all other minority ethnic groups in the Delta, had no say in the exploitation agreements (International crisis group, 2008). The conflict is also associated with colonialism and capitalism (Osha, 2006). In 1990 the people of Ogoni sought for more political autonomy and compensation for the environmental damage done to their land by oil extraction. This saw the reawakening of the

(Ogoni people) clamour for their autonomy with the issuance of the "Ogoni Bill Of Rights" declarations (Saro-Wiwa, 1990).

In August 1990 the Chiefs and people of Ogoni in Nigeria met and signed the "Ogoni Bill of Rights". By the Bill, the Ogoni people, while underlining their loyalty to the Nigerian nation, laid claim as a people to their independence which they felt was violated by British colonialism in October 1960 when they were made to be part of Nigeria (Saro-Wiwa, 1990). The "Ogoni Bill of Rights" presented to the FGN called for political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people, control and use of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, adequate and direct representation as of right for Ogoni people in all Nigerian national institutions and the right to protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation. This document was presented to federal government of Nigeria in October 1990. This declaration of their autonomy resulted to a rise in social violence and insecurity in the entire region.

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) an activist group wrote to the oil companies operating in Ogoniland demanding \$6 billion for back rents and royalties, and \$4 billion for alleged environmental damages, giving Shell 30 days to accept or leave Ogoniland (Okonta, 2003). On the 4th January, 1993, the Ogoni people stage a 300,000 man peaceful protest against Shell (Saro-Wiwa, 1995). The fallouts of the protest resulted to more insecurity and unrest in the area which led to the eventual killing of four prominent citizens of Ogoni community allegedly to be sympathetic to the government as against the people. On envisioning a breakdown of law and order in the area, the government responded by issuing a ban on all public protest and gathering in the entire Ogoniland. This decree was made by the then Nigerian Military Government headed by General Sani Abacha. In defiance of the decree, MOSOP staged another massive protest same year, this time demanded a complete stoppage of all oil and gas exploration activities in Ogoniland in response to their 30 days ultimatum given earlier. This FGN purported that the Ogoni people defiance was an act of treason and as a result requested for the arrest and detention of the MOSOP leaders. The eight MOSOP leaders that were arrested leaders were charged and tried for treasonable offences in a military tribunal and were pronounced guilty as charged. They were subsequently sentence to death for inciting violence that lead to the mobbing and killing of the four prominent Ogoni citizens (Peluso and Watts, 1999). On the 10 November 1995, amongst the eight sentenced person was Mr Ken saro-Wiwa a renowned environmentalist and prolific writer who was one of the founding member and spokesman of the MOSOP, alongside others were eventually executed by the orders of the military ruler Sani Abacha with accusations of inciting the Ogoni ethnic group against the operations of Shell and Chevron multinational oil companies, and also inciting issues that lead to the killing of the four persons (TED, 1997).

Predictions of the possible outcome of the Ogoni people struggle were uncertain at the initial stages of the dispute (Obi, 1997). Whilst the early years of the dispute appear more favourable to Shell due to the support the company had under the then leadership of the military ruler General Sani Abacha, such support was cut short at the sudden death of the military ruler in June 1998 (Edeh, 1999). His death changed the political space of Nigeria from a military dictatorship to a democratic form of government. The past thirteen years of democratic rule in the country have witness series of events where local people have demanded for their rights. Since the inception of democratic form of governance in 1999, the current and the preceding government has implored various strategies to resolve the prolonged Shell-Ogoni dispute but it has remained unsuccessful. For more acumen on Ogoni and Shell struggle refer to (Osaghae, 1995).

5. Discussion

5.1. Social Implications

Five of the twenty points demands embedded in the 'Ogoni Bill of Right' presented to the FGND has social penchants. A critical consideration of the document shows that items 4, 12, 14, 17 and 18 respectively, were demands made to address the issues of social exclusion of the Ogoni people in Nigeria. The Ogoni people believed they were forcefully amalgamated to the Eastern Region of Nigeria which consequentially made them a minority ethnic group. And they also believe that this coercion and the subsequent imposition of other tribal languages on them form part of the reason behind the extinction of their local dialect. Hence, the "Ogoni Bill of Right" made demand for more education, health care and social facilities to be sited in Ogoni region in order to preserve their local identity. Still on the issues on social exclusions, the bill contested the high level of impoverishes that dominates the entire Ogoni region, and it also highlights the level of neglect the region has suffered from the hands of the operating oil company (Shell) and the FGND. These issues were foremost in their social demands. The social implications of these demands are considered in this session.

During pre-crisis period, the Ogoni people were subjected to all kinds of social injustice; they were ostentatious by how they were marginalised by people from other ethnicity. During this period, the Ogoni people were victims of an implicit caste system which was predominantly entrenched in the southern region of Nigeria. The people were noted for their social deficiencies, which in many circumstances has caused a significant amount of their young people to only take up unskilled employments whilst their counterparts from other ethnicity go for the profitable employments. As a result of this caste system, they were given a domestic appendage otherwise known as *Ogoni piopio*. This appendage was used to define the local identity of the Ogoni people, exacerbated by their inability to seek gainful employments other than domestic house help. In the

same vein, not only the younger people were affected by this form of stigmatisation; even majority of the adults also find themselves in similar position. For example, the Ogoni tradition inhibits women in rural dwellings from engaging in any form of livelihoods activity other than fishing and farming regardless of how intelligent they may be. Making a major part of the reason why most Ogoni women do not further their education beyond elementary levels.

On the positive side, the international recognitions given to the crisis in the late 1990s, gave the Ogoni the opportunity to seek political asylum in oversea countries. This was a period of respite for those affected. Their stay in foreign countries offered them the opportunity to further their academic pursuit in those countries, and those of them who returned after the crisis period continued their studies locally in Nigeria institutions. To further improve the prospective employability of their people in the Nigerian labour market, they also implored a strategy that motivates those with privileged background to provide scholarship opportunities for the less privileged in their respective communities with a resultant rise in the number of Ogoni in gainful establishments both in Nigeria and overseas. These opportunities in the long run had a positive effect on the overall socioeconomic wellbeing of the people; one that also contributed to the remaking of the livelihood patterns of the Ogoni.

Similarly, the Ogoni uprising led the women to begin a movement that completely changed their course, the (post-crisis) period saw a rise in women activism activity in the region. The women self-liberation can be attributed to the level of civil-right activities they were exposed to during their stay in oversea countries. On their return back to Nigeria, some of these women began to engage in women activism activities in their respective communities. For example, in 1997 the Ogoni women formed an active group called the Federation of Ogoni Women's Association (OWA). This group played a key role in organising protest that reaffirmed the Ogoni people position against the FGN and Shell when the later made illegal attempts to re-enter ogoni land (Wiwa, 2010). The women used various forms of local resistance strategies to push their demands, through which they have currently become a highly politicised organisation (Ekine, 2008). The action group also presents the women opportunities to be involved in wide-ranging activities organised by their local and international counterparts. Due to the formation of OWA and the involvement of the women in activities put together by their foreign counterparts, the women became more well-informed of their rights and privileges and as a result stood up at some point to condemn practices that were hitherto hostile to their overall development as women. The Ogoni women have continued to express their social freedom in various ways both locally and internationally.

On the contrary, some of the positive opportunities that came with the post-crisis as discussed earlier also came with some losses. For instance, the over militarisation of the Ogoni communities

during the crisis period increased the cases of sexual female violation in the region. This rise was due to the sexual violations of female protesters by officers of Nigeria military supposedly posted to secure the region during the crisis period (Odoemene, 2011). The victims made this disclosure during a post-conflict Human Right Violation Investigation Panel (HRVIP) set up by the FGN to ascertain the cause of the crisis (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2002).

The post-crisis period also saw increase in cases of inter-communal disputes amongst the ogoni people. The Ogoni people have a reputation of settling disputes amicably within themselves regardless of the extent of their differences, one that allows them do so, using indigenous adjudication methods. However, this period saw the riddance of this inherent arbitrating method to a more conventional one that in effect not clearly understood by the people. The result of the people unaccustomedness with the conventional adjudicating procedures resulted in the rise of inter/intra-communal disputes with far reaching implications that almost made people to isolate the region at some point. For example a legal battle between the traditional ruler and members of his council on claim of legitimacy, and right of representation on an oil spill incident that occurred in *Bodo*, witness instances where the disputing parties go fisticuff during court sections (Sunomu, 2012). The disbursement of monetary and other forms of compensational rights associated with oil activities has become principal in generating dispute since the post-crisis period in Ogoni.

5.2. Economic Implications

A major impact the Ogoni crisis is has is noticed on the oil economy of Nigeria. The stoppage of oil exploration in Ogoni has had a huge impact on the Nigeria economy as noticed by the daily reduction of oil output. Shell has threatened to reduce its oil production by 750.000 barrels per day (Aketola, 2013) due to volatile conditions associated with other uncertainties around their exploration projections. The 'Ogoni Bill of Right' has five items (9, 10, 14, 18, and 20) that seek economical redress of the Ogoni people. The bill demands autonomy of the resources in Ogoni land, and a return of all oil revenue generated from the land at inception of oil exploration (Saro-wiwa, 1990). The Ogoni's believed that the lack of government driven economic development in their area was part of the reason the people and the region has remained economically desolated irrespective of the huge amount of resources generated from there.

Though the post-crisis periods have not witnessed a significant economic development of the entire Ogoni people however, a minority of persons have benefitted from the consciousness the crisis generated. For example, in August 3rd 2012, Shell agreed in a London High Court to settle a compensation claim for oil spills in Bodo, in Ogoni. It admitted liability for two spills from September 2008 to February 2009, from its pipeline through the Bodo swamps. Shell had hoped to settle the

case quietly out of court, for a sum believed to be well over £100m equivalent to US\$163m (Africa Research Bulletin, 2011). **Similarly**, Shell also has agreed to pay \$15.5m (£9.6m) in settlement of a legal action in a New York court where the company was accused of playing a collaborative role that led to the execution of the writer KenSaro-Wiwa and eight other leaders of the Ogoni (Pilkington, 2009). In both cases, the beneficiaries of the said compensation only form an insignificant fraction of the entire Ogoni population, hence leaving the larger section of people in the same position of want. Similarly, as a result of the attention given to the Ogoni region, the National Assembly recently passed a motion which seeks to increase the government proposed \$1 billion earmarked to mitigate the environmental degradation, social economic deprivations of the Ogoni region (Akogun, 2011).

Similarly, **Shell has also indicated its interest to re-enter Ogoni land (though the negotiation is ongoing), a development that has made all parties to pledge to put their differences behind in an attempt to bringing socioeconomic stability in the Ogoni region (Donavan, 2012). If properly implemented will mean a boost to the local Ogoni economy which has been put aback since the stoppage of oil exploration activities. On different perspective, the Ogoni people's clamour for resource control prompted the government to increase the federal allocation to oil producing states** from 5% to 13%; though this increase does not have a direct benefit on the local people as the money is paid directly into the State Government account. This is a position that makes it more challenging for the affected communities to benefit directly from the fund.

On the contrary, the exposure of the people to external influences occasioned by the crisis period has led to an increase in economic sabotaging activities such as; illegal oil theft and pipe line destruction in the entire Niger Delta region. Recently, Shell reached a decision to completely leave the region; they have commenced the decommissioning process of their facilities in Ogoni land (Donavan, 2013). A decision the company reached due to the increase in oil theft and pipeline destructions in the area. The Federal government and Shell loses an estimation of \$7 billion a year to illegal oil bunkering (theft). (Faucon, 2013).

5.3. Political Implications

From a political point of view, the post-crisis period has witnessed a rise in the political profile of Ogoni people in Nigeria. The many years of the struggle of the Ogoni People struggle has contributed to the stabilization of Nigeria's democracy. Their quest for fairness, equity and justice, during the much dreaded military era when it was difficult to discuss openly issues around resource control for fear of intimidation made them heroes of democracy, a precedent currently emulated by other ethnic minorities (Ogoni News, 2003). By implications, the Ogoni crisis has given the people the opportunity to attain more political relevance a position that was until then far reached. For

instance, Dr Magnus L. Kpakol became the first Ogoni's person to be given a national appointment. He was made the Senior Special Assistant to the President and National Coordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001, a position he held for eight year in recognition of the Ogoni's contribution to democracy. Similarly, Ledum Mitee a factional leader of MOSOP was also made the Chairman of the Technical Committee on the Resolution of the Niger Delta Crisis in September 2008. A prestigious committee that was saddled with the responsibility of making recommendations to the Government on the challenges facing the Niger Delta region with the view of assisting the FGN achieve sustainable development, peace, human and environmental security in the region (Niger Delta Technical Report, 2008). On completion of that assignment, in August 2012 Ledum Mitee was again appointed by the FRN as the Chairman of the board for Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative; which is a National Stakeholders Working Group burdened with the mandate to ensure transparency and accountability in revenue flows accruing from the extractive industry, including with the responsibility to ensure that extractive resources aid sustainable development with specific target on poverty reduction, elimination of social conflicts and creation of peaceful business environment in the country (Newsdiary, 2012). In the National Assembly, an Ogoni indigene was given the opportunity to Chair the House committee on Petroleum Downstream (National Assembly, 2013). Also in recognition of the Ogoni people contributions to the nation, especially on the economy.

At the state level, the highest political appointment in 2007 was also held by an Ogoni indigene. The position of the Secretary to the State Government of Rivers State was given to Magnus Abe in 2007, before he contested a senatorial election in 2011 and became a Federal legislator. In the upcoming general elections in 2015, the Ogoni people have also indicated their interest to vie for the governorship position for the first time in their history. They arrived at this decision through a communiqué signed by the President of MOSOP, where they unveiled the 'Ogoni 2015 Project' aimed at ensuring that an Ogoni indigene occupies the seat of government in Rivers State (Chinwo, 2013).

On the other hand, the Ogoni's have also suffered some setbacks due to the non-implementation of the UNEP report; the people believe that the non-implementation of the report was a political retaliatory strategy employed by the government due to their continuous resistant to oil exploration activities in their region. The people also believe that the government **lacked the political might to implement all the recommendations in the Ogoni report, hence the delay in the process. In response to the non-implementation of the report, thousands of Ogoni people, under the aegis MOSOP took to the streets on Monday 7 November 2011, to stage a peaceful protest in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital (Ikari, 2012).** The non-implementation of the report has

exacerbated the suspicion that is already in existence between both parties in recent years. This was also heightened when the Ogoni accused the FGN of making illegal attempt to re-enter Ogoniland without due consultations (Nwachuku, 2012).

5.4. Environmental Implications

In the area of the environment, the only realistic step the FGN has taken towards cleaning up the Ogoni region was the formation of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project (HYPREP) committee in August 2012. The HYPREP project was to consider sustainable approaches which will lead to the clean-up of the Ogoni land as recommended by the UNEP Ogoni report (Okafor, 2012). However, since the inauguration of the scheme the project has not made much significant progress. The project can best be described as one that has suffered political setback due to absence of influential people that will lobby for the implementation within the government.

The indirect environmental implications of the Ogoni crisis are weighty. For example, due to the less maintenance and monitoring of the existing oil facilities in Ogoniland have resulted in a number of environmental hazards. For example in August 21, 2001, two Ogoni communities witnessed two fires outbreak caused by ruptured Shell pipelines that eventually disrupted the source of livelihoods in those communities. Apart from incidence of spontaneous fire outbreaks in vulnerable communities, the occasion of oil spills also affects the livelihood arrangement of the people. In August and December 2008 respectively, *Bodo* in Ogoni land had two major oil spill incidents from facilities belonging to Shell. These two incidents were due to the non-operationalization of the facilities. A total of 103,000 and 311,000 barrels of oil is suggested to have flooded the *Bodo* creeks over the period of the two leaks (Vidal, 2012).

Reports of oil theft have also increased in Ogoniland. This is due to the unchecked and uncontrollable activities of oil bunkering in the area, a situation that has also caused oil pollution in the entire environment. Shell has claimed that they have suffered 137 spills as a result of sabotage and theft in 2012, with the volume loss of approximately 33,000 tonnes of crude oil. Shell estimates it is losing between 100,000 and 150,000 barrels a day to bunkering (Lionel, 2012). A claim the local communities debunked, that is not due to oil theft but rather due to Shell neglects of their pipeline network (Alike, 2013).

VI. Conclusion

This paper has reflected on some of the socioeconomic, environmental and political changes that have taken place in the past two decades in Ogoni. The paper suggests that within the period of the crisis, the Ogoni people have been able to negotiate for political recognitions which has offered

them some temporary respite even though, this political respite have not been fully utilised as a means to improve other areas of concerns. It is however important to pay close attention to the environmental and socioeconomic wellbeing of this region as they remains one of the least developed areas in the entire Niger Delta. Whilst, recognising the resilience demonstrated by the people during the period of their campaign for environmental and social justice, the paper identifies the lack of political willpower on the part of the FGN as a factor that continuously undermines the Ogoni people and their region more than two decades of this impasse. An outcome that questions the triviality of the FGN on the handling of issues that concerns requests made for local autonomy, especially when such demands are made by minority ethnic groups. The Ogonis' struggle against the central government illustrates the importance of land and the concern with which states view challenges to their power from putative separatist groups (Haynes, 1999). Whilst the Ogoni case has raised questions about the Nigeria justice system, and the issues of fight for local autonomy in Nigeria and Africa (Welch, 1995), their seeming failure to achieve socioeconomic and environmental liberation re-echoes the amount of work that needs to be done before minority indigenous communities can be said to have successfully accessed environmental and social justice when pushing for local autonomy.

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