

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background to the Study**

The search for the causes of underdevelopment in modern African societies, or state like Nigeria and Ogoni has always generated debate among scholars of African origin and their counterparts in Europe and the Americas. To proffer solution to this debate, some scholars have argued that European colonial rule in the early years of the 20th century has contributed greatly to the social, economic and political underdevelopment of Africa. Others have also argued that Africa's underdevelopment is traceable to the many years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in which Africans in their millions were taken away to serve as domestic servants and plantation workers in foreign lands. This is part of the argument of the Marxists who are of the view that underdevelopment is caused by man-made process and a long period of economic and political relationships between less-developed countries and the advanced industrialized countries of the world.<sup>1</sup> This school of thought admits that advanced capitalism as well as natural and internal forces play significant roles in engendering underdevelopment.

The argument of the Marxists that internal and external forces are causes of underdevelopment is not the focus of this study. This, therefore, calls for the consideration of the liberal school of thought. The liberal school of thought posits that underdevelopment is caused basically by internal forces or variables. Therefore, beyond the roles played by the external variables-colonialism and long period of trans-Atlantic slave trade, internal variables like oil exploration and the Land Use Act of 1978 have contributed to the underdevelopment of Ogoni in Rivers State in south-south geo-political zone of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, within the period under study.

There are some conditions which have denied Ogoni people access to and control of their land and oil produced on their land culminating in the development of underdevelopment of Ogoni. It should be understood that fear of majority ethnic group domination in the colonial period occasioned the emergence of social movements that led to the struggle for self-determination and identity politics in the Niger Delta (which Ogoni is part of) in the 1940s. The agitation culminated in the setting up of the Sir Henry Wilink's Commission in 1959. But as the hope of getting a distinct Niger Delta Republic dimmed in 1956 and the hope of having a separate Oil Rivers State got lost too, as the Commission recommended a separate area instead of a state, the Niger Delta could not be excised from the emergent Nigerian state.<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of the post-colonial Nigerian state in 1960 coincided with the transition from the oil palm to the crude oil economy. The fall of world prices of cash crops in the mid-1960s strengthened and intensified the export of petroleum products from the Niger Delta.<sup>3</sup> Here, it should be understood that the Nigerian state excluded the Niger Delta communities from the exploration of the crude oil resources. Nigerian state did this as a continuation of what the colonial state did. This is consequent upon the fact that the Oil Mineral Ordinance enacted by Lord Fredrick Lugard shortly after the amalgamation of 1914 gave Britain the monopoly of oil mineral exploration and vested ownership rights in the Crown.<sup>4</sup> Even the Colonial Mineral Ordinance of 1937 gave Shell D' Arcy exclusive exploration and prospecting rights in Nigeria and in 1938, the colonial office gave oil license covering all parts of Nigeria to Britain. To further justify the fact that Niger Delta communities were excluded, the petroleum profits tax Ordinance of 1959 gave a 50-50 profit sharing arrangement between the Nigerian state and the oil multinational corporations at the exclusion of the oil producing communities in Niger Delta.<sup>5</sup>

In the post-colonial period, Decree No. 51 of 1969 vested in the Federal Military Government the ownership and control of all petroleum

resources and Section 2 of the Decree empowered the Federal Commissioner of Mines and Power (now Minister of Petroleum Resources) to grant oil exploration, oil prospecting and oil leases to preferred citizens and companies with ownership rights outside the region<sup>6</sup>. The Off-shore Revenue Decree No. 9 of 1971 empowered the Federal Military Government to collect all offshore oil revenue from wells located in the coastal waters at the exclusion of the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta, which Ogoni is a part of. To further concretize the denial of Ogoni oil producing area access to the crude oil produced in the area, the Federal Military Government promulgated Decree No. 6 which was later called Land Use Act of 1978. This was a creation of Federal Military Government under General Olusegun Obasanjo. This Act vested all land in the territory of each state (except land vested in the Federal Government or its agencies) solely in the governor of the state who holds this land in trust for the people and he allocates this land in urban areas to organizations and individuals resident in the state for residential, commercial and agricultural purposes<sup>7</sup>. According to the Act too, similar powers with respect to land in non-urban areas are conferred on local government. The promulgation of this Act completes the process of economic exclusion.

Based on the foregoing, access to oil resources was blocked and ownership of oil rich land was denied the Ogoni people and the beneficiaries became the Nigerian state and the multinational oil corporations. The petroleum economy has therefore, brought back Europeans as multinationals into Ogoni economy and the Land Use Act of 1978 has made the state encroach on Ogoni resources with its despotic power. The majority ethnic groups in control of the Nigerian state apparatuses and power struggle to get the oil revenue to the detriment of the Ogoni people. The entrenchment of the alienation of the Ogoni people and the centralization of resources, revenue control and distribution have therefore belittled the Ogoni citizens to be subjects of the Nigerian state.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, these two vectors of economic change used by this study have thrown the Ogoni people into low agricultural productivity, food scarcity, land hunger, unemployment, alteration of traditional land tenure system, communal crises, economic strangulation and stagnation and poverty leading to the development of underdevelopment.

### **Statement of Problem**

Ogoni as an ethnic group in the Eastern Niger Delta is considered to be important due to its significant economic contributions to the Nigerian oil economy. The irony here is that this ethnic group noted for its economic viability has received little scholarly attention especially in the area of economic changes registered on the people arising from oil exploration and Land Use Act.

In the area of the changes registered by oil exploration on the economic organization of the people, no literature has been specifically devoted to the impact of oil exploration on the Ogoni people. What are available are those that capture either the impact of petroleum, oil and gas or oil exploration on the Niger Delta people which the Ogoni people are part of. From the above, the impact of oil exploration on Niger Delta in general is treated but attention has not been given to its peculiar impact as regards the changes it has registered on the economic organization of Ogoni within the period under review. This is because the impact of oil exploration on the Niger Delta people of Bayelsa state who rely more on fishing cannot be the same with the impact of oil exploration on Ogoni people who rely more on farming – crop cultivation.

From the few existing literature given, it is clear that Ogoni has not received main focus with respect to oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of change therein. Therefore, lack of adequate documentary information on the changes brought into the economic organization of Ogoni has made the researcher research on this study. At the same time, what is noticed in the above has also occurred on the impact of Land Use Act on the economic organization of Ogoni people within the period under

review. In fact, this is a virgin area in Ogoni economic history. Consequently, the desire to document these changes becomes a problem that has made the researcher research on this area.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study premised on economic changes noticed in Ogoni economic organization within the period under review is designed to assess the impact of variables like oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 on Ogoni economy. This is done to examine the magnitude of change introduced by these vectors into Ogoni economy within the period under review. It is the desire of the researcher to examine why Ogoni people still suffered pervasive poverty and environmental degradation leading to deepened underdevelopment despite the several million barrels of crude oil Shell Petroleum Development Company and Federal Government of Nigeria got from Ogoni and several acres of land acquired by both state and federal governments for several projects within the period under review. This has pushed the researcher into this topic. The study also aims at making useful recommendations that will turn the resources of the people from being curses to blessings.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is of crucial importance as demonstrated below. The study demonstrates the economic importance of Ogoni to the Nigerian state despite its neglect, oppression, marginalization, polluted environment leading to deepened underdevelopment of the area by the Nigerian state and oil multi-national giant (Shell BP) and others involved in the venal exercise of power. By this, this study shows that Ogoni people have contributed to the oil economy of Nigeria.

This work also serves as an important reference material for further researches in Ogoni economic history. Other researchers on Ogoni history will find it useful and will borrow ideas from it.

The study will also be of help to Federal Government in the area of policy making especially in the area of control of crude oil resources.

This study will also be of help to State and Local Governments in policy formulation. This will make state and local government identify the problems of Ogoni community and formulate policies that will help to solve their problems.

The study also provides an explanation to the contemporary phenomena of pervasive poverty and crisis in Ogoni community.

Recommendations of the study will be of help to some stakeholders and government functionaries.

### **Methodology and Sources**

To achieve success in this research, the researcher took into consideration the historical procedure of identifying specific problem of inquiry, critical analysis, synthesis and logical evaluation of verifiable data relevant to the research topic for proper documentation and presentation of dependable account of historical reconstruction for the benefit of man both in the present and in the future.

To achieve what is stated above, the multi-disciplinary and qualitative approaches were adopted. This was done to guide against mono-causal interpretation of historical events<sup>9</sup> which weakens greatly historical objectivity. Using the multi-disciplinary approach calls for borrowing of ideas from social sciences and natural philosophy which will be needed to explain the impact of oil exploration on the economic organization of Ogoni people.

Furthermore, primary sources were also considered very crucial in a research of this magnitude. This involves oral history and oral traditions. Oral history is the verbal account of events or life experience of participants, actors or eye-witnesses. Oral traditions refer to the testimonies of oral narrations transmitted by words of mouth from one generation to another. These two forms of oral data are spoken words<sup>10</sup> which the informants pass to people but they do not assume the position of first hand reporters<sup>11</sup>. This method was adopted because African history derives so much from oral historical sources. Also important is that some events that happened within the timeframe of this research

were not documented. Also important in data collection was archival material. This helped to strengthen other written sources.

Furthermore, to supplement oral sources of data collection, the researcher also employed collection of data through the secondary source which involves published and unpublished works. The descriptive method was also applied and quantitative analysis was also of importance.

Interesting to note is that the researcher used the critical evaluation of data at his disposal by adopting the comparative method of analyzing the evidence from the various sources before embarking on historical reconstruction. This method helped the researcher to get the main clues or information for historical reconstruction. The critical evaluation of the data was done by checking the evidence from the various sources. By this, every evidence was subject to thorough checking by considering their sources, circumstances under which they were gotten and the extent of the involvement of the respondents in the case of oral sources.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study takes up from 1958 because oil was discovered in Bomu now Gokana Local Government Area in 1958. Since oil exploration is one of the vectors of change of this study, the researcher decided to use 1958 as take up date.

In spatial term, this study focuses on Ogoni, being an ethnic group in the Eastern Niger Delta located in Rivers State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The people covered by this study are Gokana, Khana, Tai and Eleme.

In time frame, the study looks at Ogoni from 1958 to 2012 uncovering the economic changes that had occurred in the economic organization of the people using oil exploration and the Land Use Act of 1978 as carriers or vectors of these economic changes.

Thematically, the study focuses on how oil exploration and the Land Use Act have converted Ogoni natural resources from being blessings to curses to the people and have thrown the people into vicious circle of

poverty leading to deepened underdevelopment. This has brought about the paradox of plenty.

The year 2012 was chosen as its terminal date because in that year, former Governor of Rivers State, Hon. Chibuike, Rotimi Amaechi used Land Use Act to acquire 2,000 hectares of land in Khana and Tai Local Government Areas and this caused severe conflict characterized by life casualties, destruction of property worth millions of naira and forceful eviction of people. During this crisis, the six bedroom flat of the researcher was burnt to ashes.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Conceptual clarification is very important in a study of this magnitude. This is premised on the fact that it will clarify many concepts used in the study. It will make the study to be easily understood as the reader will not suffer boredom with concepts not explained. This calls for the explanation of the following concepts.

**Vectors:** Prominent among these concepts is vectors. Mathematically, vectors are qualities that have both side and direction like acceleration and velocity<sup>12</sup>. In biological science, vector is an organism which does not cause disease itself but which spreads infections by carrying pathogens from one host to another. For example, mosquitoes serve as vectors for the deadly disease, malaria<sup>13</sup>. Other examples are tse-tse flies which carry trypanosomiasis which causes sleeping sickness. Relating this to this study, vectors here mean variables that bring about negative economic changes into Ogoni economy within the period under review. In this study, vectors of change here are oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978. These are vectors of economic change in the Ogoni economy which are x-rayed to determine the magnitude of economic change registered in Ogoni economic organization within the period under review.

**Land Use Act:** Also important to be clarified is the Land Use Act of 1978. The Land Use Act was formerly known as decree No. 6 of 1978 and it was promulgated during the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo (former Head of State of Nigeria). This became effective from March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1978.



This Act vests all land in the state (except land vested in the Federal Government or its agencies) solely in the governor of a state who holds such land in trust for people and he is responsible for allocation of land in all urban areas to individuals resident in the state and to organizations for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes while similar powers with respect to non-urban areas are conferred on local governments<sup>14</sup>.

In Ogoni, this Act has empowered State Government to encroach on the people's land to the detriment of the people. An example here was 2012 acquisition of 2,000 hectares of ancestral farmland of Ogoni communities in Tai and Khana Local Government Areas of Rivers State under former Governor of Rivers State, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi for banana project. Here, only few people out of many people whose plots of land were acquired by the State for the project were paid a meagre sum of ninety-five thousand naira (₦95, 000.00) for fifteen plots of land which ordinarily would have cost six million naira (₦6, 000,000.00) only<sup>15</sup>. This is an abuse of state power. This explains why it is commented that government has resorted to force in its effort to effect the land grab, ignoring the concerns of the affected communities and the broader civil society and this land grab has resulted to social and economic hardship, human rights abuses including killing by state agents characterized by a general condition of insecurity and forceful evictions in Ogoni<sup>16</sup>. The submission of this study here is that the application of this Act in Ogoni created severe threats to livelihood and food security.

**Resource Curse:** Furthermore, "resource curse" is another concept which needs clarification. This resource curse refers to the negative development outcomes associated with petroleum and other minerals or inverse association between growth and natural resource abundance<sup>17</sup> and consequently, overdependence on the oil resource reduces growth performance.<sup>18</sup> The Ogoni resources (land and oil) within the period under review became curse instead of blessing to the people.

**Paradox of Plenty:** The resource curse above leads to the “paradox of plenty”. Here, the availability of the black gold (crude oil) and land does not improve the condition of the poor. With the emergence of the oil sector in the late 1950s, the agricultural and the manufacturing sectors experienced reduced productivity which led to poverty instead of affluence. The oil has led to the rise in the violation of oil related human rights leading to a cycle of activism, militancy and repression.<sup>19</sup> This situation has severed relationship between the people and government, as government demonstrates perverse linkages between skewed economic performance, poverty, injustice and conflict and as the gap between expectations and dismal economic performance becomes politically explosive. Instead of their wealth to give them blessings, it gives them woes.

From the above, it is clear that the Nigerian state funnelled the petrol dollars to its cronies, social class, ethnic or religious groups such that only foreigners and favourites become rich while the oil producing areas like Ogoni remained poor and excluded. Therefore, as the petrol naira failed to keep pace with demands which made the oil producing people to agitate for resource control, the state relied on militarization and repression to remain in control. Concentration of fiscal resources led to maldistribution of resources, decline in productivity and corruption.<sup>20</sup>

**Gillette Syndrome:** The paradox of plenty mentioned above leads to the “Gillette syndrome”. This is associated with a commodity or good that has advantages with a corresponding wave of crime, inflation, violence, encouragement of extortion and looting through resource predation which hinders democracy as oil revenues encourage patronage and create a class of state dependents reluctant to push for democracy and endorses despotic rule through bloated militaries<sup>21</sup>. The boom mentioned here especially in economic term is one sided as it is achieved on the part of the Nigerian Federal Government while the oil producer being the Ogoni people receive the corresponding wave of crime.

**Exclusion:** Again, that the area suffers economic marginalization arising from de-recognition of the full citizenship rights of the oil producing people like Ogoni leads to the concept of “exclusion”. This “exclusion” manifests in the volatile politics of recognition as the demand for full citizenship rights of the oil producing people is ignored, suppressed and repressed. This lack of recognition inflicts harm like economic marginalization, environmental degradation and economic stagnation which threaten the existence of this disadvantaged group. At the same time, it should be understood clearly that the demand for the recognition of the Niger Delta communities is disparate from an autonomous sphere of civic activism but it represents an effort to become a part of a transformed Nigerian state. This has led to the argument that environmental conflict in the Niger Delta as epitomised in Ogoni and recent disturbances in Warri is the outcome of disparate attitudes of the marginalized in search of a legitimate way of recognition.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the above, this concept of exclusion has made the oil resources of the Ogoni people remain under the exclusive control and management of the Nigerian Federal Government such that the Ogoni communities remain deprived of their rights to own and manage their oil resources.<sup>23</sup>

**Ownership Right Over Land:** In the Ogoni land tenure system, ownership right over land is based strictly on ancestral rights of inheritance. This type of right is enjoyed when such land is inherited or bequeathed to a man by his father. Here, the occupier of the land exercises full rights to the produce of the land and may build permanent houses and plant permanent crops on the land as he or she pleases but he or she regards himself or herself as holding it in trust for the next generation. At the death of the occupier of the land, ownership is transferred to his or her heir. But oil exploration and Land Use Act have denied them this right.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

A theory can be defined as a general framework or perspective which provides an explanation for a specific phenomenon. This simple definition is adopted by the researcher in this study.

At this point, the theoretical stance as regards this study should be made known. Here, one theory will not be used to explain these vectors of change. Each of the vectors has its theory for explanation. Based on this premise, development impossibility theory propounded by Okowa<sup>24</sup> is used to explain oil exploration as a vector of economic change in the economic organization of Ogoni. According to him, oil exploration has thrown Niger Delta (which Ogoni is part of) into deepening underdevelopment characterized by hunger, land hunger, low agricultural productivity, reduced labour force and supply of labour, unprofitable fishing, destruction of wildlife and vegetation, social vices, unemployment and oil induced inflation. Okowa by his development impossibility theory maintains that the deepening underdevelopment will continue in-as-much-as the Nigerian state is controlled by the ethnic majors who have taken the rich resources of the area, exploited and expropriated them for the benefits of the regions they occupy. He adds that whoever captures the Nigerian state captures the resources and environment of the area and there is no real hope for the development of the area and to put the development of the area in the hands of the Nigerian state is equivalent to putting the rehabilitation of a rape victim under the care of a rapist as the rape will continue.<sup>25</sup> He further describes Nigerian federalism as a cat and mouse federalism in which the cat dictates the rules of life and the mouse finds it difficult to survive and develop.

Again, explaining the changes registered by the Land Use Act of 1978 on Ogoni economic organization, the researcher chooses the "power strand" being an aspect of the theory of political economy to explain the economic changes registered on the people's economy within the period under review. Political economy as a theory has three basic strands which

are the institutionalist strand, the Marxian strand and the power strand mentioned above. The focus of this theory (political economy) is about the dynamics and reciprocal interaction of the pursuit of wealth and power and at the same time, how the state and its associated processes affect production and distribution of wealth.<sup>26</sup>

The choice of this theory is justified because the state uses this Act to acquire land in the area to the economic detriment of the people. The Act therefore enthrones the state and the capitalists to the detriment of land owners. As the land of the land owners is acquired by the state, their productive strength is reduced.

Among the three strands mentioned above, the one used to explain the effects of the Land Use Act on Ogoni economy is the power strand. The power strand states that where a society is highly underdeveloped, the change required to throw off the shackles of underdevelopment is likely to be fundamental in nature in which some people benefit while others lose.<sup>27</sup> Here, those who lose are the landlords and communities that own land while those who gain are the capitalists and the Nigerian state. Government officials use state power to acquire land forcefully and throw these communities into land hunger, food scarcity leading to hunger, unemployment and poverty. Consequently, the economically and politically privileged class gains while the communities that own land lose.

Furthermore, the power strand of the theory of political economy concludes by stating that the attainment of conducive economic conditions depends on even distribution of political powers and if this political inequality remains, the society cannot have political democracy and the society will continue to be repressive for reason of curbing the demands of those who do not have. Based on this premise, the Land Use Act has only succeeded in the enthronement of the state and the capitalist class to the detriment of communities that own land.

## **Literature Review**

Ogoni has a rich historiography and abundant literature. Earlier works concentrate on the historical developments of the area using

colonialism as a major determinant. This study is different from the works of earlier scholars as it focuses on the contemporary economic changes noticed in Ogoni communities using the oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of these negative economic changes. Therefore, to get the necessary information that will make this work rich and bring out its originality, there is the need to review related literature.

Amanyie<sup>28</sup> in his *Oil and Environmental Influence in Nigeria: A Case Study of Niger Delta* states the problems Niger Delta people experience in relation to oil exploration and exploitation. Some of the problems mentioned are environmental pollution, food scarcity, unemployment and poor human health. To have these problems solved, it recommends peace education. This recommendation is not sufficient to solve the problems caused by oil exploration in the Niger Delta. He would have added provision of gainful employment for the people, more revenue allocation to Niger Delta states and environmental clean up. Though, Amanyie does not include the effects of Land Use Act on Ogoni economy but only discusses the effects of oil exploration on Niger Delta. This study fills the gap by examining the impact of oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 on the Ogoni economy.

Again, Amanyie<sup>29</sup> in his *Agony of Ogoni People in the Niger Delta* also gives an account of the story of Ogoni people who were mobilized by a visionary leader to overcome monumental historical and psychological disabilities and their rise against their marginalization, oppression, destruction of their environment and a threatened future. He states that the Ogoni wealth is being looted by the Nigerian state and its clients (the oil multinational giant like Shell BP and others) and they further destroy by all means anything or any person that stands on the way of this venal exercise of power. It further states that the Gioko crisis of 1994 which led to the death of four Ogoni elders represents the tragic irony and low point of Ogoni struggle. A careful understanding of Amanyie's work shows that it captures Ogoni bitter experiences as a result of oil exploration with

particular reference to the Umbrella Organization of Ogoni (MOSOP) but he excludes the impact of the Land Use Act which this study has included.

Furthermore, Owunari in "Crude oil: Sweet and Sour: Efforts at Mitigating the Toxic Effects" states that crude oil has both advantages and disadvantages.<sup>30</sup> According to this work, crude oil has been the major source of revenue, energy and foreign exchange for Nigerian economy. It states that the disadvantages are poisoning of the water of the oil producing area, destruction of its vegetation and agricultural land by oil spillage. As the people's drinking water becomes contaminated, it states that the human inhabitants of the region suffer deleterious effects like cancer and other diseases. To solve these problems, it recommends establishment of cancer institute in the Niger Delta region, establishment of Regional Centre for Niger Delta Studies by the South-South states, provision of basic amenities by Federal Government inter-alia. From the above, this work centres on the Niger Delta region with reference to advantages and disadvantages the people derive from oil exploration but it does not focus on Ogoni experiences from oil exploration and Land Use Act which form the focus of this dissertation. Even at this, ideas from the work of Owunari will be very relevant to this study particularly the changes registered on Ogoni economic organization by oil exploration as a vector of change.

In addition to the above, Okowa<sup>31</sup> in "Problems and Prospects of Development in the Niger Delta" states that oil exploration has thrown the Niger Delta (the source of Nigeria's Petroleum resources) into a state of turmoil characterized by deepened poverty, increasing disempowerment, increasing alienation, bitterness and frustration. According to this work, these ugly conditions in the Niger Delta will continue in-as-much-as the Nigerian state is still controlled by the ethnic majors who dictate the rules of life and the Niger Delta people find it difficult to survive and develop. It explains its argument through the development impossibility theory and finally admits that the cause of the Niger Delta problem is the Nigerian state. Though, Okowa's work is on the Niger Delta, using oil exploration

to explain their bitter experiences but this dissertation uses oil exploration and Land Use Act to explain the Ogoni bitter experiences in economic term. The relevance of Okowa's work to this dissertation is that Okowa's work uses oil exploration to explain the negative economic changes noticed in the Niger Delta which is discussed here but with reference to Ogoni people.

Akpan<sup>32</sup> in "The Environmental Impact of Petroleum in the Niger Delta" states that the discovery of petroleum oil in the Niger Delta has brought about penury, misery, fear, curses and environmental degradation. According to this work, these conditions occur due to mismanagement and neglect on the part of the Nigerian state and the multinational oil companies and these have led to poverty and deepening underdevelopment. Akpan captures the true situations of the Niger Delta people who Ogoni people are part of but he does not focus on Ogoni people in his explanation of the impact of the discovery of petroleum oil on the Niger Delta people. This dissertation focuses on the Ogoni people not mentioned in Akpan's work and has added the impact of the Land Use Act on the economic organization of the Ogoni ethnic group.

Okorobia<sup>33</sup> in his work entitled "The Socio-Economic Implications of Oil and Gas Production in Nigeria: Some Preliminary Reflections" states that oil and gas production in Nigeria has earned the Niger Delta producing communities more woes than blessings. This work shows that Niger Delta people have protested constitutionally and violently, but the situation has not improved visibly due to insignificant attempts by government and the oil multinationals operating in the area to address the situation. Frustrated by the situation, the Niger Delta oil producing communities have advocated for resource control. To have the situation improved, he recommends that an agreed percentage of the profits of the oil multinational companies be kept for the oil producing communities and they should be used to develop the community according to their desires. From the explanation of Okorobia, this work is not on Ogoni people but on the Niger Delta people. Despite this, its ideas will be borrowed for chapter



four of this study which focuses on Ogoni and oil exploration. To cover up the gap, this dissertation discusses the impact of oil exploration and Land Use Act on the Ogoni people in economic term within the period under review.

Also relevant to the topic is the publication of Social Action<sup>34</sup> titled *Social Development Integrated Centre (Social Action) Killing for Banana, Government Land Grab, Violence and the Forgotten right of Ogoni Farmers*, which states that despite the opposition of thousands of rural farmers, Rivers State Government under the leadership of former Governor of Rivers State, Rt. Hon. Chibuike, Rotimi Amaechi still acquired over 2,000 hectares of ancestral land from poor famers in Tai and Khana Local Government Areas of Rivers State for banana project. According to the source, government resorted to force in order to effect this land grab in 2012 not minding the fate of the original land owners. The source adds that economic and social hardship, human rights abuses, killing, insecurity and forceful eviction characterized the forceful land grap in the area.

This is a true picture of the nature of the application of Land Use Act in Ogoni but this work has excluded the impact of oil exploration on Ogoni economy which this dissertation has added. This work is related to this dissertation as it discusses the application of Land Use Act by State Government in land acquisition in Ogoni and its impact on Ogoni people which is one of the major themes of this dissertation.

Still related to this study is Okoko et al<sup>35</sup> in *The Politics of Oil and the Development of Underdevelopment in the Niger Delta*. They address the relationship between oil politics and national question by stating that Niger Delta region lacks political power and as such, it is denied the power to control the benefits of oil production which are controlled by the ethnic majors that control state power. According to them, the ethnic majors are able to deny the Niger Delta region resource control through the use of the constitution and legislations. They argue that the relationship between the oil producing communities and oil companies has led to crises

between the two groups and government efforts at solving the problem have been insignificant. They conclude that only aggressive policy directed at poverty reduction can solve problem of underdevelopment of the region. Their analysis is true and it is Niger Delta based but not Ogoni in particular which is being taken care of by this dissertation.

Yirakina<sup>36</sup> in *The Ogoni Economic Crisis and Politics in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Perspective* affirms that the environment of Ogoni was conducive and favourable before the discovery of crude oil in the region but this environment has been polluted, degraded and destroyed by Shell-Nigeria and other prospecting oil company activities in the area. It states that Niger Delta states and Ogoni people have suffered political marginalization, economic strangulation, destruction of the ecosystem, land, plants, animal and denial of resource control. The work discusses the impact of oil exploration on the Ogoni in particular and Niger Delta at large but excludes the impact of the Land Use Act on Ogoni people which is being discussed or examined by this dissertation.

Moreover, Frynas<sup>37</sup> in "Corporate and State Responses to anti-oil protests in the Niger Delta" observes that crude oil exploration causes considerable socio-economic disruption leading to protests in the host communities which in turn attract state repression and very unfair concessions from the oil multinational corporations. Frynas focuses on the Niger Delta generally and ignores the Ogoni in particular. In this analysis, the work is silent on the impact of Land Use Act on Ogoni which is being discussed by this study.

In addition to the above, Ike<sup>38</sup> in *When Citizens Revolt, Nigerian Elite, big oil and the Ogoni Struggle for Self-determination* is an articulation of the historical process through which the Nigerian state functions as an instrument of economic exclusion and primitive accumulation, with attendant reduction of its citizens to subjects who are condition-bound to question the rationality of the corporate existence of Nigeria. Based on this, they revolt against the Nigerian state in an attempt to achieve full citizenship. This work restricts its treatment of

community social movements to Ogoni experience as a result of oil exploration and excludes the Land Use Act but this dissertation examines the impact of the Land Use Act on Ogoni economy as it considers it as a vector of economic change.

Moreover, Iyayi<sup>39</sup> in *Oil Companies and the Politics of Community Relations in Nigeria: The Crisis in the oil producing Communities in Nigeria*, argues that the Niger Delta crisis originates from the neo-colonial dependent character of the Nigerian peripheral capitalist economy, while contemporary social conflicts in the region are manifestations of unresolved grievances accumulated during the pre-colonial and colonial past. In discussing the causes of the Niger Delta crisis, it ignores Ogoni people and centres on the Niger Delta in general but this study discusses Ogoni using oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of economic change within the period under review.

Again, Wangbu<sup>40</sup> in "Environmental and Social Cost of oil in Nigeria: Niger Delta agitation for Justice vis-à-vis Principles of Catholic Social Teachings" traces the history of oil industry in Nigeria and also explains the nature of sharing the oil revenue in Nigeria. The major argument here is that conflicts in the Niger Delta as seen in Ogoni and Warri are the outcomes of the marginalization of the Niger Delta people who are in the search of recognition. This work centres on the Niger Delta with insignificant attention given to Ogoni people and excludes the impact of Land Use Act on the economic organization of Ogoni people which is considered as one of the major themes of this dissertation.

Furthermore, Bisong<sup>41</sup> in "Profit Maximization and Abuse of Human Rights in oil rich Niger Delta of Nigeria" argues that human right abuses in the Niger Delta are caused by the Nigerian government and the oil multinational companies engaged in oil exploration and exploitation of the oil in oil producing communities. This work is not specifically on the Ogoni people but Niger Delta which Ogoni is part of. At the same time, it is discussed to the exclusion of Land Use Act but this dissertation discusses

Ogoni using Land Use Act as one of the vectors of change within the period under review.

Also important to be reviewed here is Tamuno<sup>42</sup> in *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta, 1844-2009*. Tamuno starts from where Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta: 1830-1885* ends. Tamuno's argument on the violence attending Nigeria's adventure with crude petroleum oil and gas ends with President Yar Adua's unilateral Amnesty to the militants of the Niger Delta creeks in 2009. The work argues that the violence attending the crude oil economy is only a continuity of the colonial era of warfare to protect primary palm oil assets. According to it, the Nigerian rulers, after independence adopted this turmoil to build castles for themselves through the dominant roles played by crude oil and associated gas resources in Nigeria's economy. Tamuno's work is not specifically on Ogoni but only mentions Ogoni on few pages. It is relevant to this study as it discusses the crude oil petroleum and gas in relation to the Nigerian state and Niger Delta people which this dissertation discusses as one of the vectors of economic change. Though, this work discusses these oil wars in the Niger Delta but not specifically in the Ogoni community. To cover up the gap, this study discusses Ogoni using oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of economic change within the period under review.

Again, Onyekpe<sup>43</sup> in *Ownership and Use of Land in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Nigeria: A Survey and Critique*, explores the changing nature of land ownership and Land Use in Nigeria in the twentieth century. It also states that the colonial administration expropriated all the land in the northern section of the country through different land proclamations but in the southern section, the colonial administration did not drastically interfere with existing land tenure. It also draws a link between the Land Use Act and the crises in the petroleum rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Having established this, it recommends a review of existing laws which have not only transferred all land to Federal Government but have also given Federal Government power of veto against the demand for fiscal federalism. This work is not on Ogoni history but it is relevant to this

study as it captures existing land tenure in Nigeria and also explains how the Land Use Act has caused crises in the petroleum-rich Niger Delta region which Ogoni is part of. This work intends to cover the gap here by examining the impact of oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 on the Ogoni economy.

Nevertheless, Enyindah<sup>44</sup> in "Ikwerre and National Development: A Case Study of State acquisition of Land (1900-2000)" states that Ikwerre people in Rivers State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria have suffered serious land alienation right from the colonial period up to 2000 through several land use laws including the Land Use Act. According to the work, this has reduced acres of land available to the people, destroyed the traditional land tenure of Ikwerre people, reduced agricultural productivity and increased land dispute among Ikwerre people. Enyindah's work on state's acquisition of land is not on Ogoni but Ikwerre people. To cover the gap, this study discusses the impact of oil exploration and Land Use Act on the economic organization of Ogoni people within the period under review. Enyindah's work is relevant to this study as it discusses one of the major themes (impact of state's acquisition of Ikwerre Land on the people) of this study.

Also relevant to the topic is Adigun's "The Land Use Act: Administration and Policy Implication". It describes African Land tenure as obtained in Nigeria up to the colonial period<sup>45</sup>. He also adds that the introduction of the Land Use Act has made the state the absolute owner of land without compensating the original owners of the land. The work comments that the traditional land tenure system was responsible for peace and cohesion in traditional society. Adigun's work is on Nigeria and not on Ogoni specifically but it discusses one of the major themes of this dissertation being the impact of Land Use Act on the Nigerian people. To cover up the lacuna, this dissertation examines the impact of oil exploration and Land Use Act on the economic organization of Ogoni within the period under review.

Besides the above, Wabara<sup>46</sup> in "Land Alienation and Peasant Food Production in Ikwueke Clan in Ukwa East Local Government Area of Abia State" discusses the implications of land alienation on peasant food production in Ikwueke clan in Ukwa East Local Government Area of Abia State. He states that the promulgation of the Land Use Act has increased tension among farmers (as they are not sure of the number of acres of their land, which is still under their control), reduced the fallow period, reduced food production and increased food scarcity. Wabara's work is not on Ogoni but on Ikwueke clan in Abia State. Wabara's work is related to this dissertation as the two works discuss the impact of Land Use Act on society but this study has added the impact of oil exploration on the economic organization of Ogoni people.

Furthermore, Omereji<sup>47</sup> in "Ikwerre Land Tenure" states that Land in Ikwerre can neither be owned by individuals nor alienated except in a certain circumstance. According to the work, individuals acquire permanent plots by either inheritance or by taking up unclaimed areas, subject to the approval of the elders of the group. It also adds that communal land cannot be inherited as it is only held by traditional authority for the benefits of all (past, present and future generations). Omereji's work is related to this study as it discusses Ikwerre land tenure which is not different from Ogoni land tenure system discussed in chapter five of this dissertation. To cover up the gap, this study discusses Ogoni Land Tenure System in addition to an examination of oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of economic change.

Also worthy to be reviewed is the work of Loolo<sup>48</sup> titled *A History of Ogoni*. He discusses the migration and settlement history of the Ogoni people, political progress among the Ogoni in the colonial era, establishment of the Ogoni Division, Bori station, the Appeal Court at Bori and the construction of the Native Authority Treasury at Bori. The work excludes oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of change in economic term which are the basic themes of this dissertation. Despite the fact that these vectors of economic change are excluded, this work is

useful in the migration and settlement history of Ogoni people which forms chapter two of this study.

In addition to the above, Burabe<sup>49</sup> in his "An Economic History of Khana: 1800-2000" centres on the pre-colonial activities of Khana people (a Local Government in Ogoni) and discusses the magnitude of change that came into Khana's economy in relation to the peoples interaction with foreign capitalists and the people's integration into the world's capitalist system. Burabe, from his explanation, avoids discussing Ogoni as whole but narrows his work to Khana people in relation to the economic changes registered on the people by colonialism. Consequently, this study continues from where he stops by using other vectors of change like oil exploration and Land Use Act to explore visible economic changes registered on the Ogoni people within the period under review. Burabe's work is relevant to this study as he discusses economic activities of Khana people during the colonial period which form a part of chapter two of this study.

Again, Igbara and Keenam<sup>50</sup> in their *Ogoni in Perspective: An Aspect of Niger Delta History* synthesize existing knowledge about the origin and dispersal of Ogoni people as well as their position in the history of Niger Delta. The work also examines the socio-cultural and economic life of Ogoni people through time. In the political sphere, it distinguishes the "Gbene title" from the Gbenemene appellation. No grand theory is offered but its discussion of the colonial period of Ogoni is very sketchy as it lacks the historical essentials to make it analytical. Based on this, it remains within the confines of the narrative technique. Igbara and Keenan's synthesis of the origin and dispersal of Ogoni people is relevant to this study but they do not examine the changes brought into Ogoni economic organization by oil exploration and Land Use Act which are the basic themes of this study.

Furthermore, Ziinu<sup>51</sup> in "Ogoni and the Forces of Change, 1800-1960" examines the economic changes registered in the economic organization of Ogoni people within 1800 to 1960 using slave trade, palm

oil trade and colonialism as vectors of change. The work excludes the impact of oil exploration and Land Use Act in its assessment of economic changes in Ogoni economic organization due to its time frame (1800 to 1960). Therefore, this study starts from where Ziinu stops by assessing the impact of oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 on the economic organization of Ogoni people within the time under review.

Zeleza<sup>52</sup> in his book *A History of Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* links structures and processes, production and exchange, integrates the relations and forces of production and also captures the similarities and differences in the patterns of economic change within Africa. He offers no grand theory or interpretation as he is informed by the conviction that economic history cannot be subjected to the market paradigm of the classical theorists, world system of the dependency writers or the modes of production of the Marxists. His argument for this conviction is that economic history is about people, how they produce and reproduce their daily lives in their households, communities, societies, states and region within the continent as a whole.

Zeleza's work is on the economic history of Africa but not on Ogoni. To cover the gap, this study studies Ogoni people from 1958 to 2012 with reference to economic changes noticed in the area from 1958 to 2012, using oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of these economic changes. Even at this, Zeleza's work is relevant to this dissertation in the area of Ogoni economy before 1958.

Another interesting scholar to be mentioned here is Hopkins. In his *An Economic History of West Africa*, he uses the neo-classical paradigm of the market economists to explain West African economic history<sup>53</sup>. It discusses the economic activities of West Africa and their pattern from pre-colonial through the colonial and post colonial periods. Its central point is that the interaction of the various internal and external factors determines the structure and performance of a market economy as opposed to the early view which emphasizes the importance of external influence which is the coming of the Europeans. The work states that the



market principle was one of the common principles among West African societies. It discusses production in pre-colonial Africa in terms of static structure and functions. Seeing nothing bad in colonialism, it argues that it provided the market force which propelled West African economy, explaining that it removed the constraints which had hindered the development of export in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but his market approach is one-sided as it cannot explain all aspects of African economic history as it centres on exchange and ignores production. This work of Hopkins is on a broad section of West African sub-region but this dissertation discusses Ogoni economy from 1958 to 2012 using oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of economic change. Even at this, ideas will be borrowed from Hopkins work for chapter two which focuses on Ogoni economy before 1958.

Austine<sup>54</sup> in his *African Economic History* uses the neo-classical paradigm of the market economists and the dependency theory to explain African economic history. Using the market approach, it discusses African economy in exchange relations to the neglect of production and avoids examining the questions of growth and development which always preoccupy the classical economists and concentrates on the marginalist analysis of market processes and the problem of resource allocation. The market approach here becomes a universal economic law which is independent of time and place in relation to Africa. This approach is therefore, an abstraction from and rationalization, if not legitimation of the capitalist system.

Furthermore, its use of the dependency theory reveals that its concepts of incorporation, unequal exchange, development of underdevelopment and centre-periphery emphasize external linkage and tend to ignore internal processes. By this, this theory has more to say about exchange relations than production and this makes it clear that it does not have a comprehensive explanation of African economic history as it offers little to African economic history before Africa's incorporation into the capitalist world system. He also indicates that African pre-colonial

economy was purely subsistence-based rather than that characterized by market exchange and it was the reproduction of its existing forms and not investment in more efficient production. Here, Austine forgets that in African pre-colonial economy, exchange occurred but not as it happens in the capitalist western economies. An analysis of Austine's explanation demonstrates that the major weakness of his book on pre-colonial African economy is the use of ominous ethnographic present (information gathered from field observation of recent African rural societies) to explain the distant past of Africa.

Austine's work is not specifically on Ogoni people but broadly on African economic history. To cover the gap, this dissertation discusses Ogoni people with reference to the economic changes registered on the people by oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 from 1958 to 2012.

From the above, it is clear that most of the literature reviewed are unable to focus on Ogoni in their explanation of the economic changes registered by oil exploration and Land Use Act in Ogoni economic organization but on the Niger Delta. At the same time, most of the literature are coloured with internal colonialism and frustration-aggression approaches but this study analyses Ogoni's relationship with the Nigerian state using oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 as vectors of economic change with the development impossibility theory and the power strand theory of the theory of political economy respectively.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN Ogoni BEFORE 1958**

This chapter which discusses the geographical location of the people forms the foundation of this study. It also discusses the pre-colonial and colonial economic activities of the people. These are considered necessary as they will enable the researcher to examine properly the economic changes registered on the pre-colonial and colonial economic activities of the people by the vectors of economic change used by this study. The chapter also looks at brief historical origin, migration and settlement of the people and the impact of geography on the people. It forms the foundation of this study because Ogoni is located in an area which is endowed with crude oil and fertile land for agricultural and other purposes.

#### **Land and People of Ogoni**

Geographically, Ogoni is situated in the North of the Eastern Niger Delta mainland in Rivers State of Nigeria. It lies between latitude  $4^{\circ} 21^{\text{I}}$  and  $4^{\circ} 50^{\text{I}}$  North of the equator and longitude  $7^{\circ} 4^{\text{I}}$  and  $7^{\circ} 45^{\text{I}}$  east<sup>1</sup>. The people occupy the stretch of land running east and West of the Imo River at the point between Opobo and Rumukrushe, about eleven miles north of Port Harcourt<sup>2</sup>. The people occupy a total land mass of about 1,300 square kilometers of the coastal plain terraces to the North-East of the Niger Delta<sup>3</sup>. The area is bounded by the Ndoki in the North, Ikwerre (Obio) group in the North-West, the Annang/Ibibio in the East, Opobo/Nkoro and Andoni in the South and the Ijo of Okirika and Bonny in the West<sup>4</sup>. Ogoni comprises six kingdoms which are Babbe, Nyokhana, Ken-Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme. The area has four Local Government Areas which include Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme. It is believed that the Ogoni people settled in this territory as farmers and fishermen and established a well organized social system before the colonial invasion of 1901<sup>5</sup>. Bori is the traditional headquarters of the Ogoni people.



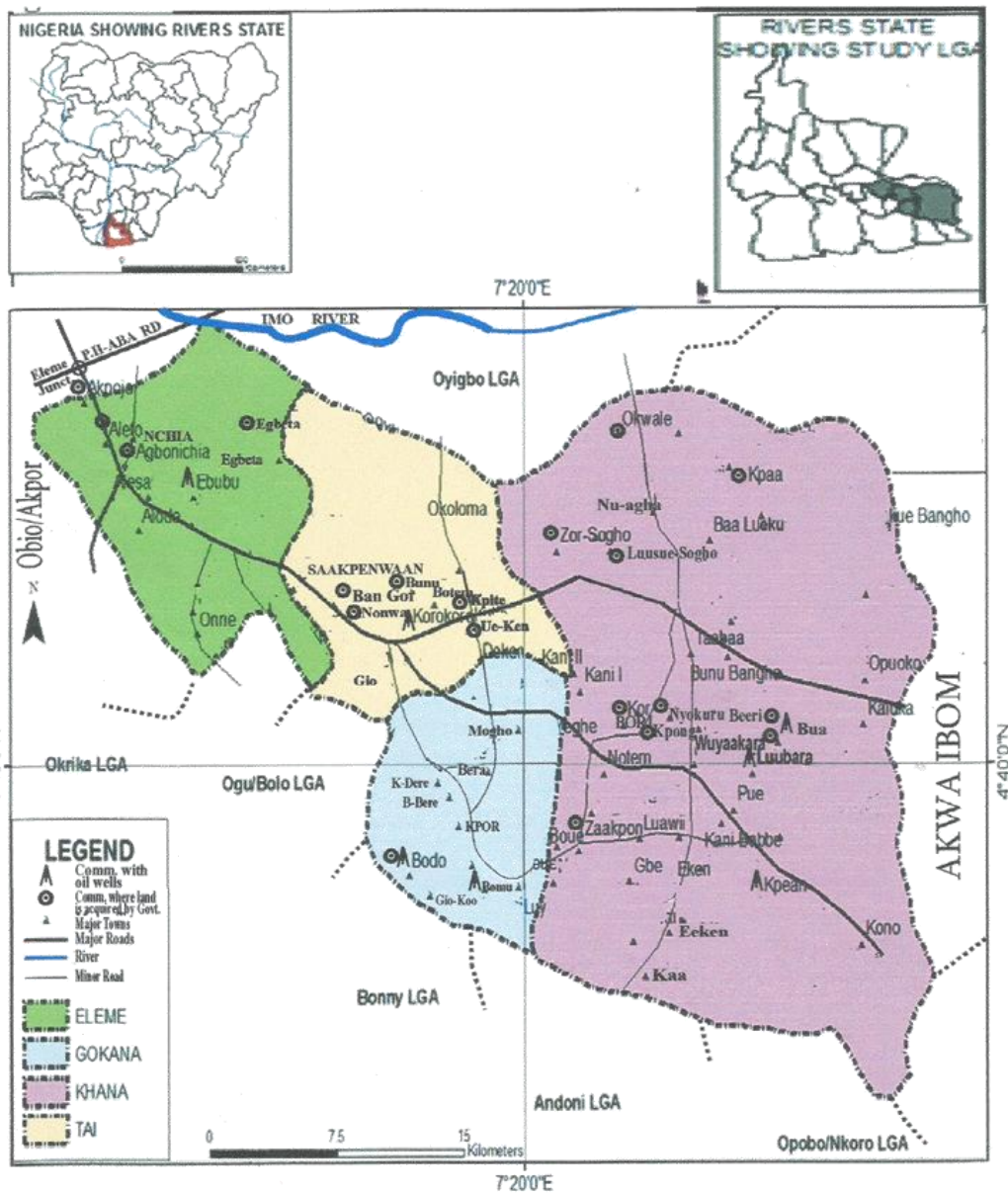
Ogoni land also forms part of the coastal plain terrain which appears as a gentle slope which is punctuated by few<sup>6</sup>. The coastal part of the Plateau is about 100 feet above sea level. The geological composition of the entire Ogoni land is mainly sedimentary rock with a mixture of sandy, loamy, sandstones and alluvial soil deposits which are dominant in the coastal mangrove forest<sup>7</sup>. In the sedimentary rock structure lies a large preserve of crude oil and gas extracted in commercial quantities.

The area has fertile agricultural land with vast rich, green, luxuriant vegetation. It also has a prevalent tropical rainy climate experiencing an average annual rainfall of about 100 inches in the months of July and September, tapering off in October and November<sup>8</sup>. The area also experiences two types of wind. One of them is the North-East wind which brings harmattan from the North, usually dry, dusty and it is associated with haze and dew which go against clear eye vision. This is witnessed from the months of December to February. The other one is the South-East wind that brings rainfall and it is always experienced in the months of March to November. The month of August experiences a slight break in rain which is usually called "August break". Mean annual temperatures are generally above 84.20<sup>F</sup> (290<sup>0</sup>) and rarely exceed 89.60<sup>F</sup> (323<sup>0</sup>). Relative humidity is also high but fluctuates between 80% and 90% depending on the season and coastal proximity<sup>9</sup>.

Ogoni has three vegetational belts which are mangrove swamp, fresh water swamp and tropical rain forest. The mangrove swamp forest is mainly found in coastal places like Bodo, Kporgo, Onne, Kaa, Sii, Gwara, Bane and Kono. The fresh water and tropical forests are characterized by coarse loamy soil which is usually fertile for agriculture. The heavy rainfall also enhances soil fertility. Consequently, the tropical rain forest and fresh water swamp have evergreen wood tress like oil palms (*Eleais guineesis*), iroko, obeche, mahogany, African walnut, among others. The Ogoni communities found in these belts are Sogho, Okwali, Taabaa, Bunu Tai, Koroma Tai, Kabangha, Agbon-Nchia, Ebulu

and Baen-Ogoi. The equatorial climate of the area supports the growth of food crops like yellow yam (Dioscorea cayenensis), water yam (Dioscorea alata), three-leaved yam (Dioscorea dumentorum), cocoyam (colocio escilanta), cassava (Manihot villissima), maize (Zea mays), banana (Musa spp) and many others<sup>10</sup>.

Again, the availability of creeks, rivers, rivulets and swamps affects the people's occupations, as many engage in fishing, long distance trade, canoe building and clay port production. These enhance free movement of goods, services and ideas out and into Ogoni. The availability of the above explains why it is said that the river systems play a much greater role as means of communication and carriers of trade and ideas<sup>11</sup>. From the above, it is clear that Ogoniland is endowed with vast fertile land and crude oil which constituted more curse than blessing to the people within the period under review. See the map of Ogoni on the next page.



**MAP 1: Showing Ogoni area and communities that produce crude oil and communities where Government acquired land**

**Source: Digitized from the Original Map, Ministry of Lands and Survey, Rivers State, (By Dr. Ukpere D.R.T. (GIS UNIT – GEV DEPT., IAUE, P.H))**

## **Brief Historical Origin, Migration and Settlement of Ogoni People**

There are three views held about the origin, migration and settlement of Ogoni people. These are the autochthonous school of thought, Ghana school of thought and the Eastern school of thought. This work demonstrates that out of these three schools of thought, the eastern school is most accurate and it is adopted in this study.

The first to be considered is the autochthonous school of thought. This school of thought holds the view that Ogoni people never migrated from anywhere and their first ancestress was Gbenebeka (believed to be the great mother of Ogoni people) who came from sky<sup>12</sup>. According to the same source, Gbenesirakinaebia was one of the original Ogoni ancestresses created by God and she first settled at Bara-Bo-ue. This theory is too weak to merit consideration because it is silent on how the area was peopled as it does not give any evidence on the production of progeny who later peopled the area. It is not adopted by this study.

Another school of thought worthy of explanation is the Ghana school of thought. Proponents of this school of thought are Loolo (1981) and Kpone (2002)<sup>13</sup>. According to Kpone, Ogoni ancestors migrated from ancient Ghana during a civil war in parts of the ancient empire under the leadership of their empress called Kwaanwaa. According to the same source, the group, after wandering for some time got to the Atlantic coast where they built canoes and later arrived at (Ibani) Bonny Island<sup>14</sup>. From here, they migrated inland and settled at Nama on the coast in Ogoni territory from where they migrated to found other places in Ogoni. Igbara and Keenam add that the name Ogoni derived from Ibani word Igoni meaning strangers, was given to Ogoni people by the Ibani people and the word Khana which would have been the original name of the people was corrupted from Ghana<sup>15</sup>.

An assessment of this theory reveals that this theory does not merit consideration. Proponents of this theory fail to understand that ancient

Ghana empire was inhabited by the Soninke people who had no linguistic and cultural affinities with the Ogoni people<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, the movement of the Ogoni from ancient Ghana to the most Southern tip of the Niger Delta means crossing several groups and communities waging several battles which have no oral and documentary evidence<sup>17</sup>.

That the Ogoni people were able to ward off external invaders like the Ibani migrants shows that Ogoni people must have settled for a long period in their present place of habitation with an organized economy and political stability which were the necessary essentials to ward off external threats to their territorial integrity and peace.<sup>18</sup>

To discredit the above argument, Igbara and Keenam argue that Ibani passed through the Ogoni on foot while migrating to the Eastern Delta<sup>19</sup>. This also supports the argument that Ogoni never passed through Ibani territory while migrating from Ghana and this argument discredits the Ghana theory. From the above argument, it is clear that the Ghana theory of Ogoni origin lacks historical merit and is not adopted by the study.

It is important to note here that the Eastern School of Thought states that Ogoni people migrated from the Southern half of the Nigerian-Cameroon border area<sup>20</sup>. It is not certain when the Ogoni people migrated from there to the Southern part of the Cross River basin from where they embarked on further westward direction to their present place of habitation. It is possible, physical challenges like rain forest, gullies and rift valleys of this region as well as the predominance of different cultures, must have influenced the migration of the Ogoni people from the area. Here, it is believed that the Ogoni people migrated from the Nigerian-Cameroon border into the Oban forest because of the abundance of food crops, fruits and other necessities of life. This account states that the Khana speakers were the first settlers followed by Tai, Gokana and Eleme speakers<sup>21</sup>.

This theory has been historically credited by Williamson's language classification which classifies Ogoni language under the Cross Rivers sub-family of the Benue-Congo branch of African languages<sup>22</sup> and Naanen<sup>23</sup> has cited the Ododop, the Jake, the Bohomo Andoni, Abua, Efik, Ibibio and Anang nationalities within the Ogoja region of Nigeria together with the Ogoni to have claimed the Oban forest in the Cameroon highlands as their place of migration.

To further support this theory, core vocabularies of the Ogoni people are compared in meanings and sounds with their neighbours (occupants of the Cross River Valley) and their current neighbours in the Niger Delta (Ijo and Igbo). This comparison shows that Ogoni people have linguistic affinity with the Anang people than the Igbo and Ijo peoples. This table is used to demonstrate this linguistic affinity. See it on the next page.

**Table 2.1: Table showing linguistic affinity between Ogoni and occupants of the Cross River Valley**

S/N	ENGLISH	KHANA	ANANG/IBIBIO	IJO	IGBO
1	God	Bari	Abasi	Tamuno	Chukwu
2	Water	Maa	Mmom	Mingi	Mmiri
3	Nose	Bion	Ibua	Nini	Imi
4	Jaw	Bep	Ebek	Ibekeke	Agba
5	Ear	Ton	Utom	Berri	Nti
6	Mother	Ka	Eka	Yingigbo	Nne
7	Father	Te	Ete	Dabo	Nna
8	Tongue	Edem	Edom	Bele	Ire
9	Wife	Wa	Uwan	Tabo	Nwanyi
10	Two	Baa	Iba	Nmai	Abuo
11	Three	Taa	Ita	Trei	Ato
12	Four	Nia	Inan	Ini	Ano
13	Seven	Ereba	Itiaba	Sonama	Asaa
14	Eight	Eretaa	Itieta	Ninei	Asato
15	Ten	Lop	Duof	Oyi	Iri
16	Yam	Zia	Udia	Burii	Ji
17	Forest	Kue	Ikot	Piri	Ohia
18	Stick	Te	Ero	Siow	Osisi
19	Onions	Ayo	Ayem	Ayo-o	Ayo
20	Bird	Anue	Inuen	Feni	Nnono
21	To break	bung	Bung	Ayi-ima	Gbajie
22	Shoe	Kpato	Ikpa ukot	Okuro	Akpukpo Ukwu
23	Ant	Nyegene	Nuene	Mene	Ahuhu
24	Wine	Mu	Mmin	Iru	Mmanya
25	What	e-doo	Nsi do	Tiye	Gini
26	Grass	Abie	Mbiet	Osuja	Ahiha

**Source:** (P.I. Igbara and B.C. Keenam, *Ogoni in Perspective: An Aspect of Niger Delta History* (Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, 2013), 33-34<sup>24</sup>).

From the table above, Ogoni people have higher percentage of linguistic affinity with the Anang/Ibibio within the Cross River Valley than their current Ijo and Igbo neighbours. With the above evidence, this study supports the Eastern school of thought of the Ogoni Origin and it is adopted in this study.

## **Impact of Geography on the People**

The geographical location of Ogoni has registered significant impact on the people's life. Specifically, Ogoni people are naturally blessed with fertile soil. This fertile soil has made the people engage in agriculture<sup>25</sup>. Consequently, food crops like yellow yam (Dioscorea cavenensis), water yam (Dioscorea alata), three leaved yam- (Dioscorea dumentorum), cocoyam (Colocacio esculata), pepper (Capsicum frutescens), fluted pumpkin (Telfeirin spp), Okra (Hibiscus esculentus), Cassava (Manihot utilissima), Cowpea (Vigna unguiculata), maize (Zea mays), garden egg (Solanum melongena) and others were grown. Among these food crops, yellow yam-Dioscorea cavenensis is highly valued and honoured and possession of barns of yam (yellow yam tubers) bestowed additional honour on the farmer. This crop (yellow yam) features prominently in many sacrifices, ceremonies and festivals in the society. This, therefore, demonstrates that yam, particularly (yellow yam) is an indigenous crop. This has made the people producers of food crops. Again, it should be noted here that the operations of oil and gas industries have reduced the agricultural productivity of the people. Aldrin dust, and chemical fertilizers applied to crops now were not applied before oil exploration in Ogoni<sup>26</sup>.

The climate and the soil support the growth of economic trees like oil palm (Elaeis guineesis) and raphia palm (Raphia vinifera). The availability of raphia palm trees made the people engage in gin distillation. The village noted for this gin distillation is Kabangha in Bangha community in Nyo-Khana. These trees have also made the people produce palm oil and palm wine. The above demonstrates that the geographical location dictates the occupation of the people.

The availability of creeks, rivers rivulets and water ways makes the people engage in fishing and pottery. Communities that engage in fishing are mostly found in coastal areas of Gokana, Babbe, Ken- Khana and places like Kala-Okoko and Opu-Okoko in Nyo-Khana<sup>27</sup>. The presence of these



rivers, creeks and rivulets has enhanced intergroup relations between Ogoni and her Andoni, Opobo, Nkoro, Okirika and Bonny neighbours. This is because through these creeks and rivers, her riverine neighbours mentioned here are able to interact with them.

In addition to the above, the availability of forest, secondary bushes and swamp makes the people have access to roots, herbs and bark of trees which are medicinal and they are used for the treatment of different ailments like malaria, intestinal disorder, women infertility, sexual impotence and bone dislocation. Some roots and leaves are also used to treat snake-bite, vomiting and frequent stooling. The availability of these roots, herbs and bark of trees has produced well known herbalists and those good in the application of these traditional drugs to different ailments for curative and preventive purposes earn huge amount of money from it. Moreso, a special bark of tree is also used as spice of palm wine. Some leaves are also used to drive away ants from any place they infest<sup>28</sup>. Even now that Western drugs have gained more dominance, traditional treatment of ailments with herbs, roots and bark of trees is not neglected.

Besides the above, the land is endowed with crude oil and gas and this has made the people suffer different things. Due to crude oil exploration and gas flaring, the people have suffered environmental degradation, pollution and economic stagnation. This explains why Okoko et. al state that oil spills, gas flaring and other activities like seismic surveys, laying of pipeline and flow stations establishment, transport, site preparation, drilling and testing associated with the oil industry have distorted the balance of the ecosystem and have also gone a long way to undermine the region's potentials for sustainable development<sup>29</sup>. The people also suffer several diseases leading to premature death. From the above, it is clear that fishing and farming, in the form of planting and harvesting of crops are no longer profitable as oil spills and emission of dangerous gases into the air kill fish in the water and destroy arable land.

They suffer all these because their land is endowed with crude oil and gas.

The availability of forest, streams, rivers, creeks and rivulets makes the people engage in lumbering, canoe building, pottery and wood carving. Communities which engage in canoe building are Opuoko, Kalaoko, Bane, Luuwa and Duburo<sup>30</sup>. These communities are able to engage in the production of canoes due to the presence of forest which supports the growth of trees like mahogany and iroko trees. The presence of these trees makes the people to engage in lumbering which is basically men's occupation. In the same vein, the availability of these trees makes the people engage in wood carving, which is also a predominantly male occupation. Due to the availability of rivers and streams, women in Buan, Luubaara, Kwa-wa in Ken-Khana and Bo-ue in Babbe also engage in pottery. This is because the rivers are able to provide the needed raw materials such as clay soil.

At the international level, Ogoni land is well known due to her geographical endowment. Between 1990 and 1995, Late Kenule Beesor Saro-wiwa (1941-1995) globalized the Ogoni people as he led them in a struggle for ownership and control of crude oil and liquefied natural gas in Ogoniland<sup>31</sup>. It is added that Kenule Beesor Saro-wiwa operating from London, Geneva, Vienna and Rotterdam used six major world organizations such as United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), European Economic Commission (EEC), The Commonwealth Secretariat, Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization (UNPO), International Court of Justice (ICJ) and World Council of Churches and Media Houses like British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA) and Cable News Network (CNN) to publicize his views.

Saro-Wiwa's use of these international organizations and media houses to publicize his environmental and human rights struggle made Ogoni to be known at the international level. Here, it should be

understood that the geographical endowment of Ogoniland and its associated marginalization, environmental degradation and pollution pushed Saro-wiwa into this struggle. The above highlighted points explain the impact of geography on the Ogoni people.

### **Brief Characteristics of Ogoni Pre-colonial Economy**

Pre-colonial Ogoni economy is discussed under the agricultural, manufacturing/industrial, trade and service sectors. In pre-colonial Ogoni economy, machines were not common for production and it was in the colonial period that the hand press was introduced for the production of palm oil<sup>32</sup>.

### **Agricultural Sector**

The agricultural sector of the pre-colonial Ogoni economy was the mainstay of the economy and here, it is discussed under manageable units of farming, fishing and palm fruit cutting.

#### **Farming:**

Farming was the traditional occupation of the people. In the pre-colonial period, about 95 per cent of the population was involved in farming. This was premised on the fact that the land was fertile. Yam was the chief or principal crop planted<sup>33</sup>. This explains why Kpone-Tonwe states that by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, yam cultivation became very competitive and attracted chiefly titles for the best and most successful farmers<sup>34</sup>. The yam planted here was the yellow yam (*Dioscorea cayenensis*). This was why yam was highly honoured and valued and possession of barns of yellow yam tubers bestowed additional honour on the farmer. It was also honoured because it featured in many sacrifices, ceremonies, and festivals in the society. This demonstrates that yellow yam is an indigenous crop. This also explains why it is called the king's food. Apart from yellow yam, other crops planted were water yam (*Dioscorea alata*), three-leaved yam (*Dioscorea dumentorum*), Cocoyam

(*Colocacio esculenta*), Pepper (*Capsicum frutescens*), Fluted Pumpkin (*Telfeiria spp*), Okra (*Hibiscus esculentus*), Cassava (*Manihot Utilissima*), Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*), Maize (*Zea mays*) and garden egg (*Solanum melongenar*). From the crops mentioned above, it is clear that pre-colonial Ogoni farmers were cultivators of food crops.

From the pre-colonial period up till the take-up date of this study in 1958, the people practised mixed cropping<sup>35</sup>. Crops like cassava, yellow yam, water yam, pepper, okra, garden egg, fluted pumpkin, three-leaved yam and maize, were planted on the same plot of land. It should be noted that due to high fertility of the soil in the pre-colonial period, adrin dust and chemical fertilizers were not applied to crops planted.

The fallow system practised within the pre-colonial period was the rotational bush fallow system. This system allowed the farmer to fallow the land for about seven years before returning to it for cultivation. This system made arable land regain enough nutrients for good crop yield. This system was practised due to abundance of land without such corresponding increase in population. This explains why Hopkins<sup>36</sup> and Law<sup>37</sup> have argued that one of the problems of African early food producers was low population density amidst a generally abundant land per capita. Another reason advanced for this agricultural practice was absence of large scale production as the food production within the pre colonial period was in most cases premised on the desire to produce for the needs of the family. This was a dominant feature of pre colonial Ogoni farming.

There was some degree of specialization in food production. Planting of seed crops, cassava, weeding of the farm and harvesting of crops were the tasks of women while men took care of clearing of the bush, digging of holes for planting of yam, planting of cocoa yam and staking of yam<sup>38</sup>. Basic tools used within this period were machetes, or

cutlass, digging sticks, hoes and traditional baskets. These tools were basically crude which did not permit large scale production.

### **Labour Organization**

Very prominent in labour organization was that there was gender based division of labour. Certain activities were exclusively for men and there were those that were considered appropriate for women and they were carried out or performed by women alone<sup>39</sup>. Clearing of bush, digging holes for planting of yam, staking of yam, climbing to harvest oil palm fruits and tapping of raphia palms were performed by men while planting of okra, pepper, pumpkin, tomato, cassava, maize, weeding of farms and harvesting of crops were the traditional activities of women<sup>40</sup>. Wood carving was basically for men while production of clay pots (pottery) was basically for women. Here, it should be understood that this sex boundary or gender based division of economic activities was not rigid as it depended in most cases on the strength and composition of the household's labour force.<sup>41</sup>

Labour tools were basically machetes, hoes and digging sticks. Machetes were used for bush clearing and cutting of sticks by men and harvesting of crops especially cassava by women. Hoes were used for harvesting yam, digging of holes for planting of yam and weeding of weeds by women while digging sticks were used for staking of yam by men. The tools used within the period under review were crude which led to reduced productivity. This means that labour in many sectors of the economy was not mechanized.

### **Source of Labour**

Labour in Ogoni economy was obtained from many ways as discussed below. First among them was the household or the family unit made up of the husband (man), wife or wives and unmarried children. This was a most important economic unit in the people's economy. The size of the household or family in term of number of members determined output. This can be used to explain why polygamy and large families were the

vogue within the period<sup>42</sup>. Polygamy and large families were considered important because infant mortality rate was very high and average life expectancy was very low and as such, many children did not attain adult age. Therefore, the more children one had, the greater the chances of survival of some of them. Again, polygamy was seen as a means of ensuring a large labour force as the larger a family the larger its pool of agricultural labour. Polygamy also reduced production cost and greatly improved range quality. This is because household labour was easily disciplined. It was mobilized from members of nuclear or extended family and the household head took control of its organization and control.<sup>43</sup> He also took control of the preservation, distribution and appropriation of surplus<sup>44</sup>. This household labour or family labour was a major source of labour in the pre-colonial and the colonial periods. Despite the coming of the Europeans and their introduction of capitalism, this source of labour remained unchanged.

Furthermore, family labour or household labour was augmented with labour recruit which could be described as mutual labour supply. In Ogoni indigenous economy, this existed in the form of societies or associations. This was very necessary in times of peak demand for additional labour particularly during bush clearing, planting of crops especially staking of yam and weeding of weeds.<sup>45</sup> These associations or societies could also be gender based age grade associations. Generally, these associations or societies were traditionally called "Gbonam". The associations supplied labour to work on the farms of members on rotational basis. In this case, nothing was given as payment but members were only fed by the host after they had finished work on his farm on that particular day. In some cases, members never depended on the host but fed themselves after work on the farm of the host<sup>46</sup>. These associations, age-grades and societies were very important in planting season when the family unit could no longer meet up the demand of labour.

In addition to the above, there also existed hired labour. Hired labour existed for those who could pay for it. A family head or any

individual who needed extra-labour solicited for hired labour. This was subject to renewal, based on the performance of the hired labourers on the farm. These people were paid at the end of a working day depending on the work. Labour was also communally organized. This normally involved the entire community engaging in community projects which could be dredging of a village pond, clearing of bush paths to another village or town, clearing of a market place, construction and clearing of community drainages, clearing of town squares and other public utilities. This was basically used for community services<sup>47</sup>. This was called "Tam Buen".

Moreso, powerful and affluent citizens had clients who owed them some obligations or indebtedness which they paid for with their labour or loyalty. This could take the form of pawning in which a member of a debtor family or a debtor served the creditor until the debt was paid<sup>48</sup>. Here, an individual could pledge his labour to a wealthy man for some amount of money he needed to settle his personal obligation. In Nyo-Khana, these people worked for their masters on "Deekor" market day and this working day varied from community to community and according to agreement reached<sup>49</sup>. The pawn continued with his creditor in this way until he was able to redeem himself by paying back the money borrowed with his labour. This was traditionally called "yiibere".

There was also the ritual slave called "Ngbo" who was bought from distant communities outside Ogoni for the purpose of ritual sacrifice to the village god or for ritual involved in the "Gbene" title taking or for the establishment of a market. His value was essentially religious but where she or he was found to be hardworking or beautiful (if a woman), he or she was integrated into the family of the owners. At this point, the ritual slave assumed economic value as he or she worked as part of the family labour. Ziinu argues that there are homes established by women and men of ritual slaves in Luuwa, Taabaa and Lueku<sup>50</sup>.

Slave labour did not make significant contribution to the pre-colonial Ogoni economy because the pre-colonial economic structure of

Ogoni society did not provide real economic need for possession of retinue of slaves. This is because the communal system of land ownership imposed constraints on individual's capacity to appropriate and extend his land or possessions at the expense of others in his lineage or community. Again, the traditional economic structure depended so much for economic production on labour provided through the reciprocal labour exchange, voluntary communal labour and the institution of polygamy to meet up the need for extra labour<sup>51</sup>. Nziidee added that the segmentary nature of Ogoni society also contributed to the insignificant contribution of slave labour to economic production. According to him, Ogoni did not have a central or territorial figure who could by force appropriate and build possessions in the form of state farms which demanded the acquisition of slaves as permanent source of labour.

The above argument does not mean that there was no relationship in which some wealthy people acted as masters to the weaker ones. As this study is not on slave trade and slavery in Ogoniland, suffice it to say that slave labour made insignificant contribution to economic production in Ogoniland.

### **Fishing:**

Another mini-sector under agriculture was fishing. During the pre-colonial period, fishing was restricted to the coastal communities like Bodo, Bomu, Dere, Gbe, Mogho and Kpor (in Gokana), Bo-ue, Kaa, Gwara and Sii (in Babbe), Kono, Bane and Kpean (in Ken-Khana) and Opuoku, Kalaoko, Kabangha and Luuwa (in Nyo-Khana). Tai and Eleme were not known for fishing. The communities mentioned here were able to fish in the pre colonial period due to the presence of creeks, rivers and rivulets, ponds and lakes, lagoons and estuaries<sup>52</sup>. Fishing was carried out to supplement farming and the canoe building industry at Ko on the Imo River aided fishing.



During the period, Ogoni used several methods and gears to exploit their fishing potentialities. These were the wounding gears, screens, traps, nets and poison. Among the wounding gears were implements like spears, arrows, clubs and knives while the fish traps included triggered traps, non-return valve traps, current traps and canoe traps. Hook-line and sinkers constituted another major category of fishing gear<sup>53</sup>. The basic principle through which this method (hook-line and sinkers) worked was that if any fish-food was hooked as bait to the hook at the end of a line, any fish that swallowed the food set as bait swallowed the hook and got caught. The fish foods used as bait were small animals like earthworm, fish-fly or plant materials. The hook-line and sinker were designed into three different gears like the poled-hook-line and sinkers, the long-hook-line and sinkers and the triggered hook-line and sinkers.

Net fishing was another method of fishing of Ogoni people and the Ogoni fishermen borrowed it from their Obolo (Andoni) and Bonny neighbours. The nets were of three types which were the scoop-nets, lift and the drag-nets<sup>54</sup>. They were employed basically to scoop fishes and crustaceans in the shallow creeks and alluvial banks of rivers and rivulets.

Another method of fishing was the poison method. This is a special herb meant for fish but does not kill human beings who eat the fish. This explains why Talbot<sup>55</sup> states that the most effective way of catching large number of fishes was by throwing poison into pools or damaged-up rivers. Special herbs which served as chemicals were squeezed and thrown into rivers, streams, and rivulets. A popular source of the poison was the smashed endocarps of the fruit of raphia palm - *Raphia vinifera*. This enabled fishermen to get many fish catches. This had the negative impact of killing both mature and pre-mature fish at a time and it took about three months for fresh aquatic organisms to begin to grow in the affected water again.

Also important within the period was pond fishing. This was done by building an enclosure made of bamboo stems, stems of oil palm, raphia palm, sticks and mud and it was decked with leafy branches of oil palm and raphia palm. This had an opening baited with ripe palm fruits and earthworm to attract fish into the enclosure or pond. During harvest, this only opening was blocked and the different fishes in the pond were caught with the assistance of traditional baskets.

The fish caught did not only meet the family needs of the Ogoni fishermen but were also exchanged for food crops produced by hinterland communities like Sogho, Taabaa, Lueku, Lorre, Luebe, Okwale, Tai and other non-fishing communities in Gokana and Eleme. It should be known that fishing was for men while gathering of periwinkles, conch and whelk was for women.

### **Palm Fruit Cutting:**

This was a very important economic activity of Ogoni people before the colonial period. This economic activity was exclusively for men but women played the auxiliary role of removing the palm fruits from the bunches. Men climbed mature palm trees with a special climbing rope traditionally called *Gbo-zoo* and younger palm trees were climbed with strong and long Indian bamboo<sup>56</sup>. The palm fruit bunches were cut down when they were ripe with the aid of machete. They were gathered together and allowed to stay for about five days before the fruits were removed from the bunches. It was at this point that women came in to render their auxiliary role of removing the palm fruits from the bunches. This economic activity was highly priced and honoured as those who engaged in this economic activity went into traditional banking in which those interested deposited an agreed amount of money for about 2 days or 1 day in a week for about one year depending on the number of contributors<sup>57</sup>. This traditional banking served as a source of capital as members and non-members borrowed money from the group in time of

need. This led to the formation of a special group noted for capital generation. This was a major source of income.

After removing the palm fruits from the bunches, they were allowed to ferment before the fermented palm fruits were boiled and pounded in a mortar. After pounding, the palm nuts were separated from the pulp which was later squeezed to get palm oil. It should be understood that boiling of palm fruits, pounding of the boiled palm fruits and squeezing of the pulp to get oil were the duties of women while men harvested the ripe palm fruit bunches.

Palm produce was important for some reasons. First among these, as already said, was that it was a source of income not only in the local market but also in trade relations with the Ogoni neighbours of Andoni, Okrika and Ibani. The kernel shells and chaffs served as traditional fuel. The fried palm nuts produced palm kernel oil traditionally called *Noo-ip* which was used by traditional midwives to lubricate the genital organ of women during child-birth. It was also used to neutralize satanic poison and also served as cream especially for new-born babies to protect their bodies against infections<sup>58</sup>. The palm oil was used as food as it served as food flavour.

## **Service Sector**

The servicing sector of pre-colonial Ogoni economy was able to service other sectors of the traditional economy before the colonial period. Here, palm wine tapping, hunting and transport are discussed under the service sector.

### **Hunting:**

This was important in the service sector of Ogoni traditional economy before the colonial period. Hunting in the area dates back to pre-historic times and took place in Tai, Eleme, Khana and Gokana of Ogoni. This explains why Okorobia<sup>59</sup> records that some of the early

ancestors of the Delta communities were hunters who discovered great and good settlement sites during their hunting expeditions. In pre-colonial Ogoni, hunting served as a source or means of adding meat to their diet. It was basically carried out by men.

In pre-colonial Ogoni, hunting was done mainly with weapons such as bows, wooden and iron arrows, spears, clubs and trained dogs called *gbo-ue*. Besides these, Ofonagoro<sup>60</sup> has also added that an Nkwerre trader and blacksmith named Agugua produced and lent out 105 guns to Ogoni hunters. This decision was premised on the agreement that the hunters would bring about 60% of their game to the Nkwerre blacksmith and trader. This also supports the use of guns by Ogoni people in hunting in pre-colonial period.

Some communities like Sogho, Tai and Gokana organised hunting in honour of certain deities like Ataagbara and Gbene-asigere. This explains why they had Ue-gbo Ataagbara and Ue-gbo Gbene-Asigere in Sogho community. In this type of hunting, experienced hunters were always invited from neighbouring communities to make the hunting successful. Meat obtained from this type of hunting was only shared among the hunters and the priest of the deities. Trained dogs, machetes, arrows, spears and sticks were used. This hunting was always carried out in the reserved forests of the deities concerned.

In some cases, hunters organized themselves to hunt and chase away animals that destroyed crops<sup>61</sup>. Guns, traditionally trained dogs, sticks, machetes, arrows, spears and setting of traps were involved. The game was for the hunters but not shared between the farmers and the hunters. For the dogs to be effective, certain herbs were poured into the nostrils of these trained dogs and this made the dogs search for the animals with full force and ferocity. While the dogs were hunting the animals, the head hunter (*te-ue*) carrying guns and others carrying different objects would be positioned at different strategic positions to kill

any animal that was within their reach. The head hunter motivated the trained dogs with hunting chants like;

Aa ye - catch it

Bii yebaloo - hold it tight

Ee naa ba - that is it

These chants, were traditionally believed to be heard by the dogs and they made them increase force and ferocity when hunting animals.

At the same time, there was also birds hunting<sup>62</sup>. As the name implies, it does not mean that the hunting expedition was basically for birds but it was meant for both animals and birds of different types. In this hunting, only machetes and sticks were allowed while guns were not used and youths took active part in this than the ones mentioned above<sup>63</sup>. This was organized in honour of the deity controlling the farm where the community farmed in a given year. According to him, before the commencement of the hunting, sticks were cut into different measurements and kept at the grove (si yor wii) of the deity controlling the farm for three days. He maintained that the spiritual implication of this was that the sticks should kill any animal they touched but not to injure human beings. At the end of the three days, the chief priest of the grove would offer sacrifices and perform certain rituals that were meant to declare the hunting successful and free of human accident. This was normally carried out on Deesor market day. At the end of the exercise, the game was shared among hunters and the priest of the deity. This was a one-day affair.

In Eleme, hunting was organized in honour of a departed hunter or warrior as part of burial rites<sup>64</sup>. Ngofa states that before the hunting could commence in any bush, the spirit of the departed colleague was invoked to tell him that they were there to honour him and he should make the hunting successful<sup>65</sup>. At the end of the exercise, the participants and

members of the bereaved family shared the game. This was also done when a village head named *oneh eh eta* died in Eleme. Hunting was organized for him as a form of last honour. The game was shared among hunters that participated in the hunting.

### **Palm Wine Tapping:**

Palm wine tapping was another economic activity of Ogoni people in the pre colonial period. The wine gotten from this activity helped to service other sectors of the economy. This was exclusively for the male sex. The people mostly known for this were people from Babbe clan<sup>66</sup> and with this practice, they were said to have displayed a true knowledge of botanical science. To tap the wine, the head of the raphia palm tree (*Raphia vinifera*) was cut off with the aid of a special ladder meant for this. At the top of the cut raphia palm tree, a U-shape opening through which the wine flew out of the raphia palm tree was made and a sizeable clay pot for the collection of the wine was tied to the U-shape opening at the top. This clay pot was called *kana mii*. The wine that poured into this clay pot for the first two to three days did not always have good taste. During this period, the palm wine tapper administered special herbs to the raphia palm tree for it to produce good quantity and tasty wine<sup>67</sup>. The clay pot was always emptied morning and evening depending on the rich content of the raphia palm tree. He added that the clay pot was always washed at regular interval usually in the morning for good taste and cleanliness of the wine. Instead of the two times (morning and evening) daily collection of the wine from the collecting clay pot, some rich raphia palms offered three times being morning, afternoon and evening. If this monitoring was not done and it overflowed the pot and dropped on the ground, the original good taste was lost and in some cases, due to heavy weight of the pot, it could fall down leading to economic waste. In some cases, a special brownish pounded bark of a tree was added to the wine to improve the quality and only wine from raphia palm trees was used for

the production of traditional gin. This wine was used for socio-cultural and economic purposes in pre colonial Ogoni society, the informant added<sup>68</sup>.

Besides, palm wine was also tapped from oil palm trees – *Elaeis guineensis*. This was not fermented but used for the production of traditional gin. In Khana, Tai and Gokana, oil palm trees were cut down or uprooted with branches cut off before they were tapped but in Eleme, they were left standing and tapped. The U-shape opening was also made at the top of the oil palm trees and clay pot for collection of the wine was tied at the U-shape opening through which the wine flew into the clay pot. This clay pot was also emptied morning and evening depending on the richness of the oil palm tree.

Economically, palm wine tapped from raphia palm tree and oil palm tree generated enough money for the people. The wine featured prominently in socio-cultural activities like marriage, festivals, ceremonies, initiation into different societies, libation and invocation of the spirits of deities and ancestors. It was also used for entertainment, rituals, settlement of disputes, incantation and burials. It was also used to boost the lactation of a nursing mother.

Palm wine tapping was so valued or honoured such that festival was organized for it. This was noticed in Sogho and Bo-ue. It was called Demii in Sogho and De-yor mii in Bo-ue. In Sogho, particularly Zor-Sogho, it featured the display of a masquerade called Nkpa-Kue. This was entertaining and successful palm wine tappers dined and wined together that day. It was a festival that was meant to honour the gods of the land for the technology displayed in palm wine tapping and honour men for being able to use this technology to harness their environment to satisfy their needs.

This palm wine tapping technology discredits Eurocentric view that Africans including Ogoni were not able to do anything good before the coming of the Europeans because they were able to use this traditional

technology to harness their natural environment to meet their traditional needs. To demonstrate that they were known for this, Pepple and Dakoru<sup>69</sup> comment that Ogoni people start entertainment with palm wine before the real food. This explains why Adams<sup>70</sup> as far back as 1950 commented that Bonny people were not able to tap palm wine from raphia palm trees in their own environment but were satisfied with buying it from the Ogoni palm wine tappers.

### **Transport:**

Human portage dominated the transport sector during pre-colonial period as goods or wares were carried on human heads for long distances by land. Water transport existed but paddled canoes were used to transport goods from one place to another through rivers and creeks. It should be noted that the porters were hired. It is clear that the transport sector was labour intensive and not capital intensive. Air transport, pipe line transport and rail transport were completely absent but people trekked along bush paths for long and short distances. It can be summarized that the Ogoni transport system in the pre-colonial period was stressful and labourious.

### **Manufacturing/Indigenous Industries**

In pre-colonial Ogoni economy, some forms of manufacturing took place. Production in the manufacturing sector was not mechanized but manual. Materials gotten from the environment served as raw materials. The main areas of strength were gin distillation, pottery, basketry, roofing mat and sleeping mat production, wood carving and canoe building.

#### **Gin distillation**

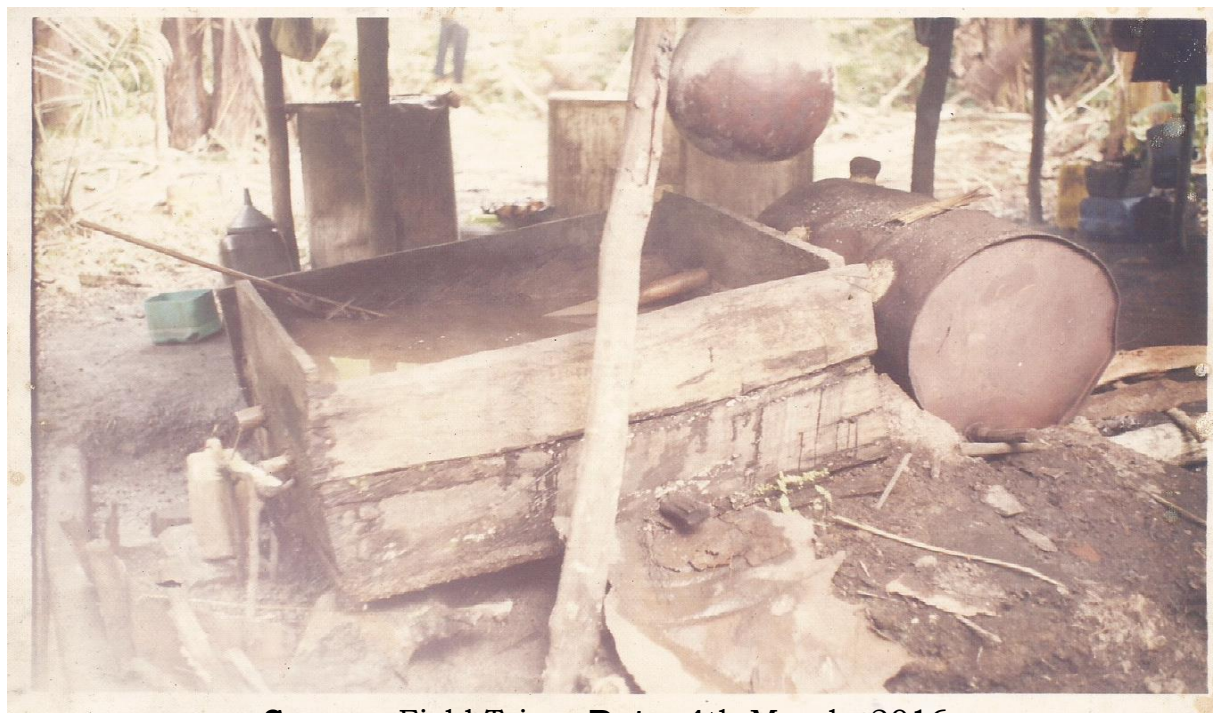
This traditional industry was of great social and economic importance in Ogoni society. This industry came up as a result of the traditional occupation of palm wine tapping as palm wine was the raw material. To produce the traditional gin, palm wine was fermented for



about one week. This fermentation allowed for high concentration of alcohol in the fermented palm wine<sup>71</sup>. Distilled sugar was added to the fermented palm wine and boiled to produce the indigenous gin. Production sites were close to where palm wine was produced. To avoid competition with foreign manufactures during the colonial period, colonial government declared this gin to be illicit and banned its production. This led to the decline of this industry.

Traditional gin was a major source of income which also made the people survive. This featured prominently in entertainment, marriage, settlement of disputes, libation, festivals, ceremonies, sacrifices, invocation of ancestral spirits and initiation into societies. See the apparatus for gin distillation on the next page.

**A PICTURE SHOWING APPARATUS FOR Ogoni GIN DISTILLATION**



**Source:** Field Trip: **Date:** 4th March, 2016

## **Pottery:**

This was another area where the Ogoni people demonstrated their manufacturing prowess in the pre colonial period. In Rivers State, Derefaka<sup>72</sup> dates pottery-making to over a thousand years ago. Places noted for pottery in pre colonial Ogoni were kwawa and Buan in Ken-Khana and Bo-ue in Babbe. Bo-ue clay pots were stronger than those of other Ogoni areas because clay material used to produce their pots was dug from salt water swamp which was richer than those of fresh water swamps.

Pottery making was carried out by the female gender and production had four stages. The first stage featured digging of the clay from the swamp. If the producer had old pottery materials, they were properly ground and later mixed with the new clay through the matching process. The second stage was the moulding stage and the quantity used depended on the size and type of pot needed. The moulding was by gradual process to ensure its smoothness and avoidance of cracks. This was followed by the solidification process. After this, it was kept for one day and checked the following day to see whether there were cracks or not. The third stage was the drying stage which took five days. The third stage also involved the burning or heating process. The next and final stage was decoration stage. This came up when the pot was cool. Decoration and drawings were done with boiled sap of mangrove tree<sup>73</sup>.

The pots produced by these women were used as articles of trade. Pots produced by Ogoni women supplied water pitchers and pots of disparate inscriptions to their Ijo, Igbo and Ibibio neighbours<sup>74</sup>. They were also articles of long distance trade with the aid of canoes. The clay pots were also used for food storage, palm wine collection, preservation and sacrifices. See pottery products on the next page.

**A PICTURE SHOWING PRODUCTS OF OSONI POTTERY**



**Source:** Field Trip: **Date:** 4th March, 2016

## **Canoe building:**

Canoe building was another important indigenous industry in Ogoni before the colonial period. This canoe building technology enabled the people to control their environment as they were able to use the canoes to navigate the creeks and rivers for fishing, transport and trade. Coastal communities like Ko (Opuoku), Kalaoko and Luuwa in Nyo-Khana, Bane and Duburo in Babbe all in Khana Local Government were known for canoe building<sup>75</sup>. Ogoni became the major source of the product in the Eastern Niger Delta. Consequently, Ogoni people became the distributors of both small fishing canoes and large transport canoes throughout the region<sup>76</sup>. They supplied their Ijo neighbours who depended very much on canoes but did not make canoes. This canoe industry also provided jobs for many men that paddled the canoes. See products of canoe building on the next page.

**A PICTURE SHOWING CANOES PRODUCED BY OSONI PEOPLE**  
**Source:** Field Trip: **Date:** 4th March, 2016



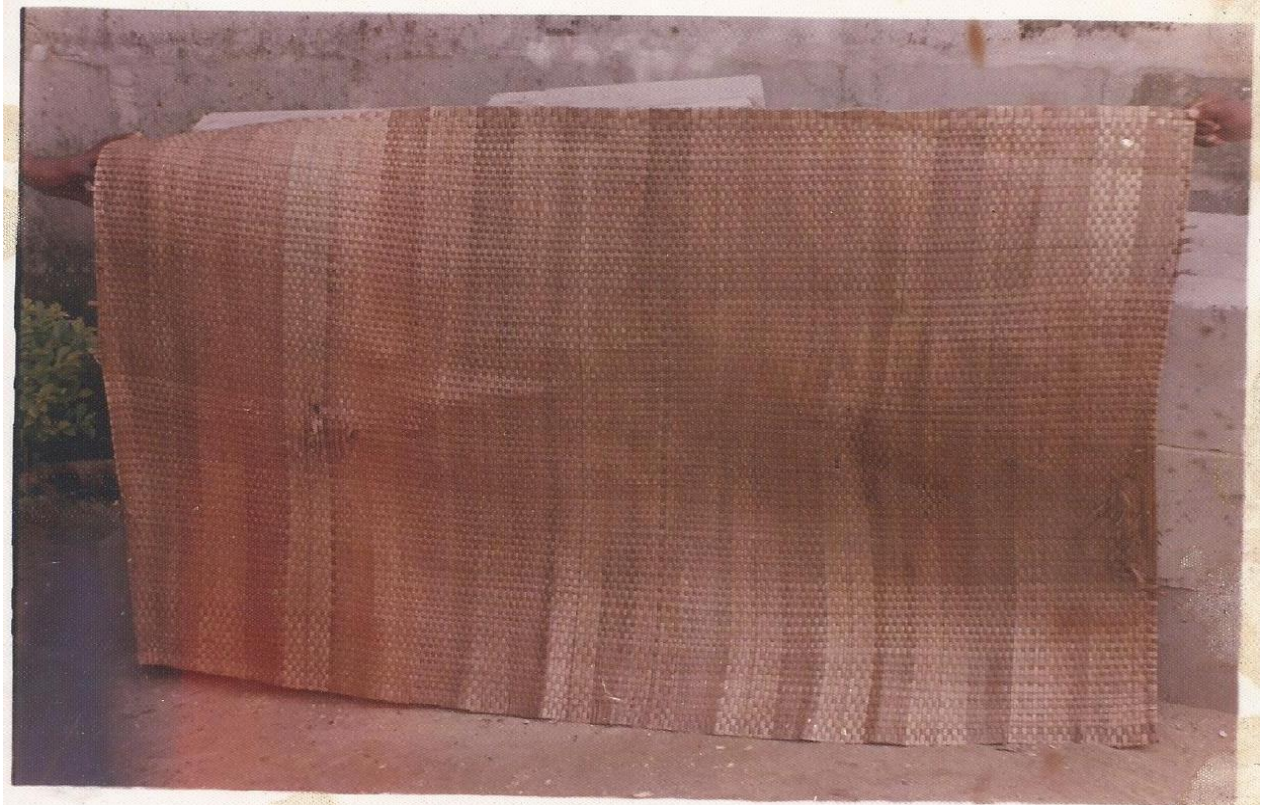
**Weaving:**

Ogoni people also expanded the scope of their industry to weaving. Under weaving, the people were able to weave baskets. These baskets were produced with reeds, canes and the branches of raphia palm (*Raphia vinifera*), oil palm tree (*Elaeis guineensis*) and screw pines (*Pandanus candabrum*). These baskets were used by farmers to carry tubers of yam, oil palm fruits, cocoyam and cassava. They were used as standard of measurement of articles of trade during the period of barter economy. This was basically the economic activity of men.

**Mat production:**

The Ogoni also produced sleeping mats and roofing mats were produced. Roofing mats were produced with the fronds and branches of raphia palm tree. Places mostly known for this were Luubaara, Bianu and Wiyaakara. These roofing mats were used for roofing houses and construction of mat doors. The roofing mats were basically produced by men. Sleeping mats were produced by women from Wiyaakara, Bane, Luubaara, Duburo, Bo-ue, Buan, Kpean and Sii communities. Mats were used as foams for sleeping and drying of seedlings. They also used them as coffins for burial in the colonial period. See next page for the pictures of the Ogoni sleeping mats.

**A PICTURE SHOWING SLEEPING MAT PRODUCED BY OSONI PEOPLE**



**Source:** Field Trip: **Date:** 4th March, 2016



## **Carving:**

Ogoni people during the pre-colonial period also engaged in wood carving. These wood carvings were in different forms like stools, mortars, pestles, drums, knife and machete handles, wooden beds and chairs<sup>77</sup>. Masks were also produced. The raw material for the carving of masks, stools, drums, knife and machete's handles, mortars and wooden bed was hard wood. These were produced by special people with technical skill. Face masks produced included Karikpo, Amanikpo, Koromuu, Waalu and Birete. Musical instruments carved were thumb piano and wooden gong. Other objects carved were wooden spoons and wooden trough (some appearing in the form of table and plates and another in the form of tray). This wooden trough was used to serve food and processing of palm oil. This was called *Ka-kuan*. This justifies N-ue's observation that Ogoni wood works especially masks are scattered in British museums<sup>78</sup>.

## **Trading sector:**

Trade featured prominently in the economic activities of Ogoni in the pre-colonial period as no one community was self-sufficient economically due to disparity in ecological endowments. This was the basis of short distance trade and long distance trade in Ogoni. Moreso, technology also played significant role in determining the pattern and organization of trade in pre-colonial Ogoni. The relationships established between these two forces – environment and technology – can be seen in the availability of fertile land, leading to surplus production which led to increase in population and growth of industries such as pottery, canoe building, wood carving, basketry and others. To give credence to environmental factor in the form of availability of fertile land leading to surplus production, Austine comments that the type of exchange relevant to African markets was the one that involved surpluses and sometimes unevenly distributed shortage in mutually complementary systems of specialized productions<sup>79</sup>.

It should be understood that territorial differentiation in terms of production of crops and craft materials became the basis of exchange. Therefore, crops and products of industries in one community were exchanged for what others produced. It is clear that the Gokana-yeghe axis supplied the bulk of the yam while Nyo-Khana people especially Okwali, Sogho, Lueku, Luebe, Lorre and Bangha produced the bulk of the cassava (Manihot utilissima), Pepper (Capsicum frutescens), three leaved yam (Dioscorea dumentorum) and cocoyam (Colocacio esculenta)<sup>80</sup>. Communities like Bodo, Bomu, Opuoku and Luuwa located near rivers produced fish. These products were exchanged on Ogoni market days. These market days were Deesor, Deemua, Deebom, Deezia and Deekor. At the community level, each community had a market day. For example, Deebom was a market day for Sogho community, Deekor was a market day for Okwali, Deesor for Taabaa, Lueku and Kpite Communities and Deemua was market day for Korokoro.

At the clan level, exchange was usually held on rotational basis on Deezia at Duyaakara, Deebom at Kibangha, Deekor at Dukono, Deebom and Deekor at Kiwinghan market at Dere, on Deesor and Deemua at Du-Gio, on Ochum at Echii Oloboro and on Obo at Echii Nchia. Here, it should be noted that the prefix "Du" is for market in Khana, "Ki" is for market in Gokana and Echii is for market in Eleme. What is being discussed above at the community and clan levels are built into short distance trade described by Hopkins as a trade that takes place within a radius of up to about ten miles of the area of production which is within the distance that can be covered in one day on foot and one can still return home after marketing one's products<sup>81</sup>.

A major characteristic of this local trade was moral rectitude as sincerity and honesty were succinctly maintained. Their goods with their known prices displayed at the front of their houses or huts while they attended to other businesses were bought and the money was kept for the owners of the goods<sup>82</sup>. This was very true in the case of palm wine.

Within the period under review, Ogoni people also engaged in long distance trade. Ogoni pottery wares were traded in Kalabari and other Ijo areas as well as among the Anang/Ibibio in the Cross River basin<sup>83</sup>. The Ogoni people also supplied their Ijo neighbours canoes. The Ijo people did not produce canoes but they depended so much on canoes. They (Ogoni people) have also been said to have supplied their Andoni and Ibani neighbours cassava, yam, pepper and three-leaved yam and got in exchange fish. They also engaged in trade with Tombia people. This was through canoe. This was the yam trade. They also travelled to Egwenga, Kefe, Essene, Ohambele, Azumini, Awa, Ndiya to sell their goods. It should be noted that women dominated the local or short distance trade while men dominated the long distance trade. This was because men are noted for display of bravery and fearlessness.

### **Basic Characteristics of Sectors of The Economy**

Basically, sectors of the pre-colonial Ogoni economy displayed a number of characteristics.

First, generally, there was no clear cut division among the various sectors of the economy particularly within the pre-colonial period<sup>84</sup>. For instance, a farmer could be a hunter and a palm wine tapper could be a producer of indigenous crafts. This also happened in the colonial period.

Another characteristic of the various sectors was that they were devoid of mechanization. The tools used in all the sectors were crude. For example, in the agricultural sector, tools like digging sticks, hoes, machetes and traditional baskets which were very crude were used. In the transport sector, human portorage and use of labourious canoes were employed.

In addition to the above, the sectors of the economy were labour intensive and not capital intensive. Manual labour was in higher demand for production purposes than capital.

Besides, production within the sectors of the pre-colonial Ogoni economy experienced some elements of subsistence<sup>85</sup>. This argument has been supported by Falola when he states that pre colonial people especially Ibadan grew mostly yam, corn and vegetables essentially for their subsistence need with very little surplus to exchange for salt and potash which they could not locally produce<sup>86</sup>. The same author has added that economic activities were geared towards short-term needs. At this point, it should be understood that means of production were very crude and could not have led to large scale production as seen in capitalist Western economies.

Also important to be considered here is that the pre-colonial Ogoni economy experienced coherence and articulation. The sectors of the economy experienced some elements of forward and backward linkages. This is because agricultural sector produced food crops used by the servicing, manufacturing and trading sectors. The manufacturing sector produced canoes used by the service sector and baskets used by the agricultural sector. By this, it means there was regional or sectoral complementarity and reciprocity. Ake has documented that colonial economy was incoherent and disarticulated and never experienced forward and backward linkages in production<sup>87</sup> which was experienced by the pre-colonial economy.

Of all the sectors of the economy, agriculture was the most dominant sector and remained the greatest employer of labour. In fact, every sector depended on the agricultural sector as this sector supplied products that generated meaningful activities in other sectors of the economy. The above discussed points were the features or characteristics of the sectors of Ogoni pre colonial economy. From the above explanation, it is clear that the people produced abundant food, though at the subsistent level and they were able to harness the environment to meet up their needs.

## **Brief Analysis of Colonial Economy up to 1958**

In discussing the colonial economy of Ogoni, it should be noted that several scholars have given several arguments about colonial economy. Eurocentric writers have praised Britain for her economic management of her colonies while the dependency writers have stated that nothing good came out of colonialism and have also argued that Africa's underdevelopment is traced to colonialism<sup>88</sup>. Irrespective of the above views, this discussion examines certain sectors of Ogoni colonial economy and concludes that it was exploitative and characterized by incoherence and disarticulation.

### **Agricultural Sector:**

The agricultural sector of Ogoni colonial economy was export oriented. There was emphasis on massive production for export. This was done to enable Ogoni people produce raw materials such as rubber and palm produce to satisfy the industrial demand of the British industrial economy at home. They established a cash crop economy which means a change over from a subsistence economy<sup>89</sup>. The concentration on the production of cash crops diverted farmers attention from food crops to cash crops. These cash crops were palm produce (palm oil and palm kernel), rubber and timber. Diverting attention from the production of food crops to cash crops led to food scarcity.

At the same time, it should be understood that the traditional system of production did not change as the colonial system depended largely on harvest from wild oil palm trees and processing remained the duty of local women. This explains why Akpan<sup>90</sup> states that the British policy did not favour the establishment of foreign owned plantation agriculture in Nigeria. Akpan supports his argument with the British fear of interfering with the traditional land tenure system. He explains that interference with the traditional land tenure system might spark off political unrest which Britain was not ready to experience.

At the same time, the only thing introduced into palm produce production was the hand mill from the period of the Second World War<sup>91</sup>. This hand press was located at Gure, Baen, Nyokuru and Kaa, all in Khana. He adds that it was given to Nwenbiara by the Niger Delta Pastorate Mission (Anglican Church) when the mission established palm plantation in the late 1940s and during this period, Ban-Ogoi and Ebubu were important milling centres in Tai and Eleme respectively.<sup>92</sup>

Due to the interest of Britain in palm production, some individuals went into palm plantation scheme, a new thing in Ogoni agriculture<sup>93</sup>. Examples of these people were Dike from Okwali, Michael Gua from Botem-Tai and Timothy Birabi from Yeghe. This led to the emergence of a new class of people whose economic fortune was based on participation in colonial agriculture.

Missionaries also supported the production of palm produce as the Niger Delta Pastorate had oil palm plantation at Nwenbiara and Methodist Church had one at Taabaa. Generally, it should be understood that the colonial government's involvement in the production of palm produce as raw materials remained at the level of nursing and distribution of seedlings to farmers and direct cultivation by colonial government officials was seen only in cases where palm trees were planted around their places of residence. Mechanized cultivation was not practised.

### **Manufacturing/Industrial Sector:**

In the colonial period, European consumption was saturated and Europeans wanted to raise new masses of consumers in other parts of the world to avoid putting their industrial society into bankruptcy. This explains why Onwuzirike<sup>94</sup> states that colonial economy was based on the theory called "colonial pact". According to him, this theory implies that the economies of the colonies should be tied to those of the imperial countries in a way that will be beneficial to the metropol. Consequently, the colonies should be made to buy from and sell to the colonial power

even when they could do so more profitably elsewhere. This theory dictated development efforts in the colonies. Consequent upon the above theory, no conscious effort was made in the industrial sector. Colonial government emphasized the production of export products at the expense of industrialization. This explains why Akintoye cited in Akpan states that the attitude of Britain was to make sure that the colonies remained as sources of raw materials and markets for their finished goods<sup>95</sup>.

In colonial Ogoni economy, Britain did not encourage industrialization. It was after the Second World War that the hand mills and the cracking machines were introduced into the palm oil processing system. The introduction of these cracking machines and hand mills was not efficient as they were few compared to the demand. Indigenous manufacturing within the period also declined. A good example here was the traditional gin distillation. This was discouraged to avoid competition with foreign or imported spirits. In fact, in the Ogoni society, anybody caught producing the indigenous hot drink was arrested as it was declared illicit<sup>96</sup>.

The introduction of European manufactures also led to the decline of indigenous manufacturing. These European manufactures were tins (containers) and jute bags (sacks) in place of traditional calabash and baskets which the people used to convey palm oil and palm kernel. Consequently, the production of traditional baskets declined and the techniques and technology for the production of these traditional baskets were neglected.

At the same time, it is stated that there were few manufacturing industries during the colonial era. Akpan records that the Lever Brothers, the largest British soap manufacturing started soap production in Nigeria in 1923<sup>97</sup>. This increased palm kernel production in Ogoni. The products of this company were primarily use-values which increased consumption and never stimulated industrial growth in Ogoni colonial economy.

From the above, it is clear that Europeans were not interested in the industrialization of Ogoni society. This explains why it is said that 1945-1955 development plans show that all British territories in Africa were to spend £210,000,000 while those of French were to spend £277,000,000<sup>98</sup>. This therefore shows that Britain invested limited funds in the development of her colonies and this negatively affected industrial development in the British territories.

## **Service Sector:**

### **Transport**

One principal reason for the provision of transport infrastructure was for the easy evacuation of exports to Britain. The roads constructed were not basically for the interest of the colonized but for the economic advantage of the colonial government. To achieve their desire of exploiting the bounty of nature (raw materials) in Ogoniland, the colonial administration began the construction of Kalaoko-Sogho road by 1915<sup>99</sup>. This road was meant to serve as a link between the colonial authority based at Egwenga and the out-station (native-court) at Sogho. He adds that the Kono-Port Harcourt road was begun in 1934 and completed in 1935.

Apart from road construction, bridges were also constructed in Kono-Bo-ue, Sogho, Kwaawa, along Zaakpon-Eeke road, on Bori-Kaani-Sogho road and along Gwara-sii road. Here, it should be understood that the construction of these roads and bridges was to quicken the evacuation of raw materials from Ogoni through the sea to Britain. These roads and bridges were constructed through forced labour.

The bombardment of Ogoni communities in the name of arresting mature and able men for forced labour did not go unresisted<sup>100</sup>. One of the men who mounted this resistance was Ntaa Akpunwaa, who was the chief of Sogho. The chief, highly irritated and offended at the unnecessary



bombardment of his territory by the colonial soldiers during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, boldly refused to mobilize his men for this forced labour. Consequently, the British colonial authority arrested and detained him for three days for flouting its authority.

Within the colonial period, rail transport was not developed in the Ogoni society. This was not prioritized in the area. What was encouraged was road transport as discussed above. Here, it should be understood that the colonial administration embarked on road construction based on the Road and creek proclamation of 1903<sup>101</sup>.

### **Imposition of Tax:**

Imposition of tax was another aspect of colonial economic activity in Ogoni economy. This started in 1927 with census and assessment of people for the purpose. At first, a flat rate of six shillings per adult male was imposed by 1928 but later reduced to four shillings due to the world economic depression within the 1930s<sup>102</sup>. This met local resistance as demonstration by the people against imposition of tax led to death and incarceration of people in Ogoni. For example, Yorko Yobe was shot dead when demonstrating against taxation at Egwenga by one Chief Mac-Peple, a colonial representative at Egwenga and Tamanasiga of Bane was imprisoned in about 1933 for questioning Gibbons, the colonial Divisional Officer why the tax he promised would last for only three years was allowed to continue for more years<sup>103</sup>.

### **Trade:**

During this period, organization and marketing system of produce changed marginally. Instead of traditional calabash and baskets for the conveyance of palm oil and kernel, they used tin containers and jute bags. Within the period, they exchanged their produce for foreign manufactures which included soap, salt, kerosene, biscuits, stockfish and cloths. It should be understood that these manufactures were use-values

and were incentives for the production of cash crops<sup>104</sup>. Trade within this period was enhanced with the introduction of British currency which was well known in Ogoniland in the 1920s<sup>105</sup>. The first to be introduced was "red shillings" later replaced with the "white copper coin". The new currency replaced the manila which was officially withdrawn from circulation in 1949<sup>106</sup> but remained popular among the local people until 1954.

At the same time, Ogoni traders had direct contact with the Europeans and companies at Egwenga as the blockade mounted by king Jaja of Opobo had been removed due to his death in 1891. Some of the companies operating at Egwenga were the John Miller, G.B. Olivant, Bulk Oil Company, and United African Company. Prices of produce were not fixed by the Ogoni people but by the Europeans. To substantiate this argument, the United Kingdom Ministry of Food operated through the West African Produce Control Board (WAPCB) to pay for export produce from the colonies<sup>107</sup>. This board fixed prices for African produce to the disadvantage of the people. This explains that the trade was dominated by the Europeans at the expense of Ogoni people.

Also important to note here was the degree of unequal exchange during the period under review. Ogoni markets were saturated with cheap European manufactures which were basically use-values or the consumables. These were jugs, containers (tins), jute bags, spirits, stock fish, biscuit, gun-power and others while Ogoni people exchanged their cash crops like palm oil, palm kernel, rubber and timber for European use-values. Ogoni products served as raw materials for European economy as they were converted to different finished goods which served different economic purposes. European use-values in Ogoni only increased consumption at the expense of production. Consequently, this brought a new economic order which led to unequal exchange or relationship characterized by underdevelopment of Ogoni and development of Britain.

Also important to be mentioned in the colonial era is labour emigration. This was the time that Britain went directly to recruit the indigenes of Ogoni for contract labour and sent them to Spanish Plantation owners in Equatorial Guinea commonly called the province of the Gulf of Guinea. This was done after concluding arrangement with Spanish plantation owners in Equatorial Guinea to supply them cheap labour from Nigeria. The recruitment seemed attractive to Ogoni youths as they likened their conditions to those who were in palm oil and kernel trade and those employed in the services of the missions, trading companies and colonial administration but they never understood that very poor conditions awaited them in Equatorial Guinea.

The wages of the labourers were very low and by 1959, it was increased and they were paid one hundred and ten pesetas per month and out of this, twenty shillings were deposited at the Spanish labour office in Nigeria for payment to the labourers as their contract terminated after a period of 18 months which they signed for<sup>108</sup>. As their pay was very low, some of them renewed their contract for another 18 months or 36 months but this did not help, the informant adds. As their conditions did not improve, post independence Nigerian government between 1975 and 1979 decided to withdraw them from Equatorial Guinea to Nigeria. This labour emigration registered negative impact on Ogoni economy as it denied the community its active population which would have initiated development plans. This explains why Ochefu states that colonial labour emigration disarticulated the society institutionally and materially<sup>109</sup> as it destroyed many marriages institutionally and the labourers invested their labour power in the economy of Equatorial Guinea at the expense of Ogoni. This explains material disarticulation.

From the above, it is clear that Ogoni colonial economy was characterized by incoherence and disarticulation as the roads and bridges constructed, tax imposed, forced labour introduced, cash crops production, labour emigration as well as introduction of currency were for

the benefits of the colonial administration at the expense of the Ogoni people. These were designed to advance the process of exploitation by agents of foreign capital. Ochefu states that the process of disarticulating the society was informed by the need to make the conditions so severe that the people would have to react positively to colonial stimuli<sup>110</sup>. This argument justifies the argument of Ake<sup>111</sup> who states that investment decisions in the colonial economy were guided by the principle of capitalist accumulation of making maximum output from minimum input within a minimum amount of time.

Consequently, the desire of the colonial government in colonial Ogoni was for foreign appropriation of surpluses from Ogoni economy instead of investing them in Ogoni economy to generate additional demand and further investment. Based on this, local demands which were generated were satisfied by imports from Britain such that secondary investments were not stimulated. From this argument, it is argued that colonial government fed the colonized with fish but never taught them how to catch fish<sup>112</sup>. For this reason, the investment decisions of the colonial government were implemented with "Single mandate". Despite this, there were fall-outs which benefited Ogoni but in the final analysis, the colonial government gained more than the Ogoni people.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **BRIEF HISTORY, EXPANSION AND GROWTH OF CRUDE OIL EXPLORATION IN OGONI**

Crude oil, a very versatile and flexible non-reproductive, depleting, natural (hydrocarbon) resource is very significant in modern world economic activities. By this, crude oil or petroleum is a bituminous liquid with many substances. Very important among them are carbon and hydrogen known as hydrocarbons<sup>1</sup>. Despite this, small amount of non-hydrocarbon elements are also found in it. Prominent among these are sulphur (with 0.2 to 0.6% in weight), Nitrogen and Oxygen. Having established this background, the focus of this chapter is to state the history of crude oil exploration in Ogoniland, its growth and expansion. It should be understood that oil exploration and production are capital intensive ventures, and activities associated with oil exploration and production have resulted in the degradation of Ogoni environment and destruction of the economic organization of the people. It is also stated here that the people are marginalized in employment by oil companies operating in Ogoni community and oil produced by the people has remained under the control and management of Federal Government, thereby depriving the people the right to their oil and management of their oil resource. These situations led to socio-economic vices and crises and economic underdevelopment. These also impoverished the people and threw them into serious underdevelopment. Here, Development Impossibility theory is applied to explain the dynamics of oil exploration and production in relation to Ogoni economic organization within the time frame of this study.

#### **Historical Background**

The search for oil deposits began in Nigeria in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, probably 1908 by a German Bitumen Corporation which started oil exploratory activities within the Okitipupa area, about 200

kilometres East of Lagos<sup>1</sup>. However, the company left Nigeria at the onset of World War I. Later, license was granted D'Archy Exploration Company and Whitehall Petroleum. Unfortunately, these companies did not find oil in commercial quantity and because of this, they returned their license in 1923<sup>2</sup>. As these companies returned their licenses, a new license covering 357,000 sq miles was granted a new company called Shell D'Archy Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria. This new company was a consortium of Shell and British Petroleum which was then known as Anglo-Iranian. This company which was granted a license in 1937<sup>3</sup>, began exploratory work in 1938<sup>4</sup>. At first, this company was granted license to explore oil all over Nigeria but in 1955, the land area covered by the original license was reduced to 40,000 square miles in and around the Niger Delta Basin as in that year, Mobil Exploration Nigeria Incorporated was granted exploratory license over the whole of the former Northern Region of the country. Despite this, actual drilling activities started in 1951 and the first test well was drilled in Owerri. In 1953, oil was discovered in non-commercial quantity at Akata near Eket and before this Akata find, the company had spent about £6m (6 million pounds) on exploration activities in the country.

In pursuit of commercially available crude oil, Shell-BP found oil in Oloibiri in the present day Bayelsa State on the 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1956 and Oloibiri is an offshore oil field located in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State<sup>5</sup>. It is about 45 miles (72 km) East of Port Harcourt. On 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1956, Shell D'Archy changed its name to Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd to reflect British Petroleum interest. In December, 1957, the company started production while in 1958, Nigeria made the first shipment of oil from Nigeria to Europe<sup>6</sup>. Based on this, in 1960, a total of 847,000 tonnes of crude oil were exported. Based on the success recorded at Oloibiri, further discoveries were made in Afam in Oyigbo Local Government Area in Rivers State.

In 1958, crude oil was also discovered in commercial quantity in Bomu in Gokana Local Government Area in Ogoni, in Korokoro in Tai Local Government Area in 1962 and in Ebubu in Eleme Local Government Area in 1963, all in Ogoni<sup>7</sup>. In Ogoniland, crude oil was discovered in Bodo West in Gokana Local Government Area, Yorla, Kpean and Lubaara Creek in Khana Local Government Area<sup>8</sup>. Based on these discoveries, Ogoni alone has over one hundred (100) oil wells out of one thousand, four hundred and eighty-one (1,481) oil wells in Nigeria, eight (8) out of 159 oil fields in Nigeria and four (4) flow stations. Out of these one hundred and fifty-nine (159) oil fields, Niger Delta has (78) seventy-eight.

Despite the efforts of Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company in oil exploration, towards the end of the 1950s non-British firms were granted licenses to explore oil and each license covered an area of 2,560 sq kilometres and was subject to the payment of ₦1,000,000.00 (one million naira)<sup>9</sup>. These were Mobil in 1955, Tenneco in 1960, Gulf Oil later in 1961, Agip in 1962 and Elf in 1962.

### **Growth and Expansion of Oil Exploration in Ogoniland**

Despite the fact that crude oil was discovered in Bomu in commercial quantity in Gokana Local Government Area in 1958, it was also discovered in other Ogoni communities that Shell Petroleum Development Company expanded the scope of its operations. Following this, crude oil was discovered in Korokoro in Tai Local Government Area in 1962 and in Ebubu in Eleme Local Government Area in 1963. As Shell Petroleum Development Company expanded its operational scope, further discoveries were made in Bodo in Gokana Local Government Area, Yorla in Khana Local Government Area and in Lubaara creek in Khana Local Government Area<sup>10</sup>. From 1958 to 1991, that is over 30 years of oil exploration and exploitation by Shell Petroleum Development Company, Ogoni provided the Nigerian state over 100 billion United States of American dollars. In return for this huge amount of money gotten from



Ogoni, Ogoni people received nothing other than injustice, marginalization in the provision of pipe borne water, electricity, job opportunities and environmental cleanup. Those conditions made the Ogoni people demand for resource control under the umbrella of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). To a large extent, the above situations in the light of frustration-aggression approach, justify the rights of the oppressed, repressed and exploited people of Ogoni to rise to resist the continued and unmitigated unjust treatments be it political, social or economic, especially when such treatments have reached unbearable extent.

In 1988, the Eleme refinery was nationalized<sup>11</sup>. It was owned and run by Nigerian National Petroleum Company. Its refining capacity was expanded to 150,000 barrels per day and was later commissioned in 1989. The current refining capacity of the refinery is 210,000 barrels per day.

Owing to the capacity of Ogoni in oil production as demonstrated above, Shell Petroleum Development Company started a refinery at Alesa-Eleme in 1962, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State for easy refining and exportation of petroleum products. The refinery was completed in 1964 and commissioned in 1965 with an installed refining capacity of 35,000 barrels per day and later expanded to 60,000 barrels per day in 1983. Still within Niger Delta but outside Ogoni territory, the Warri Refinery was commissioned in 1978 with an installed capacity of 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) and upgraded later to 125,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 1986. The second Port Harcourt Refinery was commissioned in 1989 and it was established to supply internal markets and export surplus. The Kaduna Refinery was commissioned in 1980 with an installed refining capacity of 100,000 barrels per day and later expanded in 1986 to 110,000 barrels per day. With these refineries, Central Bank of Nigeria states that their capacities exceed the internal consumption of refined products in which the one that is most used is the premium motor spirit (gasoline) whose demand by estimate<sup>12</sup> is at 33 million litres per day.

Consequent upon the economic capacity of Ogoni in crude oil production, by 1967, statistics of crude oil production in Ogoni showed that Bomu with twenty-five (25) oil wells produced 76,637 barrels per day, Ebubu with seven oil wells produced 3,440 barrels per day and Korokoro with six oil wells produced 20,519 barrels per day<sup>13</sup>.

Here, it should be understood that attention is focused on Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of Nigeria. Though, Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) can be mentioned but more attention is focused on Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of Nigeria. But Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company withdrew its staff from Ogoniland in January 1993 and ceased production in the middle of 1993 due to the agitation of Ogoni people under the umbrella of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) for resource control begun in 1990 with the production of Ogoni Bill of Rights which contains the grievances of Ogoni people. Chevron as an oil servicing company has become silent due to the withdrawal of Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company.

Ogoni people under their umbrella organization named Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) through the Ogoni Bill of Rights made their grievances to the Nigerian Government and Nigerian people in 1990. Accordingly, they stated that petroleum was discovered in Ogoni at Bomu in 1958 and since then, an estimated US 100 billion dollars worth of oil has been carted away from Ogoniland while Ogoni people remained in perpetual want of pipe-borne water, electricity, good roads, well equipped schools, hospitals and industry<sup>14</sup>.

That the people continue to suffer degrading effects of oil exploration and exploitation like polluted lands, streams and creeks, atmosphere polluted with hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, acid rain and oil spillages, they become victims of land hunger and food scarcity and health hazards generated by an atmosphere charged with hydrocarbon

vapour and carbon monoxide. Even mining rents and royalties are paid to Nigerian Federal Government instead of Ogoni people. By this, Ogoni is being killed for the survival of Nigeria.

The people also observed that Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria did not employ them in a meaningful way which is in defiance to Federal Government regulations. In addition to the above, the neglected environmental laws and substandard inspection techniques of the Federal Government have led to the complete degradation of the Ogoni environment, turning Ogoni homeland into an ecological disaster.

Based on the above grievances, Ogoni people within this period demanded for political autonomy. By this, they would participate in the affairs of the Nigerian Republic as a distinct and separate unit by whatever name called, provided the autonomy would guarantee the following;

1. political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people.
2. the right to control and use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development.
3. adequate and direct representation as of right in all Nigerian institutions.
4. the use and development of Ogoni language in Ogoni territory.
5. full development of Ogoni culture.
6. the right to religious freedom.
7. the right to protect Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation<sup>15</sup>.

On the part of Ogoni people, these demands were made as they were equal members of the Nigerian Federation which contribute and have contributed to the growth of the Federation and have a right to expect full returns from the Federation. This is because as a small ethnic group of the Nigerian Federation, they expect the same treatment given to the larger ones. These demands mentioned above were carried to

everywhere in Nigeria and abroad by MOSOP and its leaders. MOSOP mentioned here is an Ogoni organization dedicated to the preservation of Ogoni environment and the achievement of rights to all Ogoni people<sup>16</sup>. It is a non-violent and non-governmental organization that engaged in press war with Nigerian Federal Government through instruments like truth and wisdom<sup>17</sup> under its spokesman, late Ken Saro Wiwa. Unfortunately, its spokesman and other associates were hanged for a crime they never committed. This was injustice of the highest order.

The oil exploration in Ogoni expanded and grew to a point that Shell Petroleum Development Company awarded contracts to other oil servicing companies. Important among these was Wilbros which is an American Oil Servicing Company. Shell Petroleum Development Company awarded a contract of laying of pipes from the Bomu oil fields to the north across the River Niger<sup>18</sup>. Wilbros swung into action by bulldozing forests, farmland and crops in Biara community on the 28th April, 1993 under the supervision and protection of well armed Nigerian soldiers. By this contract, the affected communities would have their land and crops destroyed. Consequently, on 29th April, 1993, some people from the affected communities organized themselves and protested against the destruction of their crops and farmland<sup>19</sup>. During this protest, the armed Nigerian soldiers maltreated many of the people. Examples were Mrs. Barinee Bodo who was thoroughly beaten and Miss Kogbara, K. who was thoroughly wounded and had her left hand amputated<sup>20</sup>.

The next morning, thousands of Ogoni protesters marched to the scene of the incident enmass with cassava leaves in their hands to block the path of the bulldozers to make Wilbros stop work. Reacting to this, the armed Nigerian soldiers rained bullets on defenceless Ogoni people and this led to the untimely death of many of them namely NenninBari Paa, Sunday Giadom and Baribe Tanee of Biara-Gokana<sup>21</sup>. Even if Wilbros does not compromise on safety of equipment and men of the company, there was no good justification or reason for the armed Nigerian soldiers

to open fire on defenceless Ogoni people when Wilbros men and equipment were unharmed. It should be pointed out that in January, 1993, Shell Petroleum Development Company suspended operations in Ogoni for what the company called threats to staff and equipment but what made the company renew operations in April, 1993 is what this study calls a calculated attempt to commit genocide against Ogoni people.

Here comes in the concept of exclusion as the land owners were not consulted when Shell Petroleum Development Company awarded this contract knowing that it would involve bulldozing of farms. This exclusion manifests in the volatile politics of recognition as the demand for full citizenship or ownership right of the oil producing Ogoni people is ignored, suppressed and repressed. This lack of recognition inflicts harm like economic marginalization, environmental degradation and economic stagnation as noticed in Biara-Gokana in 1993. The land owners being Ogoni people are ignored and the concept of "exclusion" applied here makes the land and oil resources of the Ogoni people remain under the exclusive control and management of the oil multinational giant like Shell Petroleum Development Company and Nigerian Federal Government. To avoid friction, the land owners would have been consulted before Wilbros would have started work. But as this was not done, the people protested and this further led to casualties and wounds which led to life disability as noticed in the case of Miss Kogbara, K. who had her left hand amputated due to the wound inflicted on her by armed Nigerian soldiers. If the people were duly consulted, this ugly event would not have happened. This explains why Ogoni people accuse Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of full responsibility for the genocide against them<sup>22</sup>.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF OIL EXPLORATION ON OGONI ECONOMY**

This chapter focuses on the impact of oil exploration on the life of Ogoni people. The chapter documents that oil exploration negatively impacted on the people in the areas of poor agricultural productivity, employment, environmental pollution and degradation, untimely death, looting and destruction of shops, frequent crises and conflicts. This work states that it was a vector of negative economic change during the period under review.

#### **Oil and Ogoni Employment**

It is important to state from the outset that the interest of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and other oil companies in Nigeria is profit making. The technical and complex nature of the oil industry also make the oil companies look for the best people for employment. Consequently, employment in the oil companies is based on merit<sup>1</sup>. This makes the companies look for firstline qualifications (first class graduates, second class upper graduates, post graduate qualifications and those with long-standing experience) and these make the employment process very competitive.

Furthermore, despite the competitive nature of the employment process, ethnicism which has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria is a factor that has denied Ogoni people employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company. Consequently, employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company has been ethnicized to the disadvantage of the Ogoni oil producing people. It is also argued that opening the existing employment opportunities in Shell Petroleum Development Company to the Nigerian ethnic majors is disadvantageous to the Ogoni people due to the numerical strength of the ethnic majors<sup>2</sup>. This is due to the uneven



development brought about by the ethnicized Nigerian state since independence. Based on this, ethnic politics is applied in employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company. Consequently, the application of ethnicism in employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company is disadvantageous to Ogoni people as they are not among the ethnic majors that control the ethnicised Nigerian state. Tables of ethnic distribution of the employees of 1997 in Shell Petroleum Development Company are used to explain the point stated here.

**Table 4.1 Ethnic distribution of junior staff of Shell Petroleum Development Company as at August 1997**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Ijaw	192	14.0
Urhobo	188	13.7
Igbo	182	13.3
Others	171	12.5
Ibibio	139	10.2
Ikwerre	91	6.7
Isoko	88	6.4
Yoruba	78	5.7
Delta Igbo	64	4.7
Itsekiri	53	3.9
Ishan	47	3.4
Ogoni	40	2.9
Bini	35	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Corporate Recruitment, 1997<sup>3</sup>

From the table above, it is clear that Ogoni got an insignificant number of 40 employees out of a total of 1,368 junior employees in 1997. The percentage here is 2.9% out of one hundred (100) percent. From the table too, it is clear that Igbo got 182 employees out of 1,368 employees which give 13.3% out of a total of 100%, Ijaw got 192 employees (the highest) out of 1,368 employees with 14% out of 100% and Urhobo got 188 employees with 13.7%. This shows that employment of junior staff in Shell Petroleum Development Company favoured other ethnic majors at the expense of the Ogoni people during the period stated above. This

supports the argument that employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company during the period was ethnicized. This explains why other ethnic groups like Igbo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Urhobo, Ibibio and others as stated in the table above got more employees than the Ogoni people. The point to be noted here is that this condition increased rural poverty and unemployment in Ogoni community during the period covered by this study. Consequent upon this, to the Ogoni people, oil exploration is seen as a vector of negative change.

The ethnic distribution of senior staff in Shell Petroleum Development Company in 1997 is also used to explain Ogoni's employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC).

**4.2: SPDC Senior Staff by Ethnic Groups – Company Wide. August 1997 Figures**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yoruba	666	23.6
Igbo	638	22.7
Others	270	9.6
Urhobo	249	8.8
Ijaw	218	7.7
Ibibio	139	4.9
Ishan	132	4.7
Delta Igbo	125	4.4
Isoko	110	3.9
Bini	109	3.9
Itsekiri	67	2.4
Ikwerre	50	1.8
Afemad	44	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2817</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** T.E. Anaemeje, "The role of crude oil in the development of Rivers State (1967-2012)", A long essay submitted to Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, 2015, 116<sup>4</sup>.

From the table stated above, it is clear that the ethnic majors being Yoruba got 666 employees out of a total of 2,817 senior employees in 1997, Igbo got 638 out of 2,817 employees, Urhobo got 270 out of 2,817 senior employees. Other ethnic groups stated in the table got the remaining figures as stated in the table. A clear look at this table shows

or indicates that the Ogoni people were completely omitted in the employment of senior staff. This shows that Ogoni people were not favoured by employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company within the period under review as they were not represented at the senior staff cadre. This does not mean that they do not have the certificates and long experience needed.

The above explains why only 40 Ogoni persons were seen as junior employees out of 1,368 junior employees as at 1997 in Shell Petroleum Development Company. Out of this number, as indicated in the table above, Ijaw got 182. This was because at the senior level, the Ogoni people were not represented during the period under review. As they were not represented at the senior level, nobody spoke on their behalf in time of employment. This explains that employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company within the period was ethnicized and Ogoni people were dominated and suffered exclusion especially during the employment of senior staff as indicated in the table stated above in Shell Petroleum Development Company in 1997.

**Table 4.3:** SPDC senior staff by ethnic group company wide. September 2009 figures

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yoruba	680	23.4
Igbo	650	22.3
Others	296	10.2
Urhobo	254	8.7
Ijaw	222	7.6
Ibibio	143	4.9
Ishan	137	4.7
Delta Igbo	129	4.4
Isoko	114	3.9
Bini	113	3.9
Itsekiri	71	2.4
Ikwerre	52	1.8
Afemad	48	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,909</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Anaemeje, The role of crude oil in the development of Rivers State (1967-2012), 2015, 118<sup>5</sup>.

This table shows that from 1958 to 2012, Ogoni people were not represented at the senior cadre or level of Shell Petroleum Development Company. It is clear that the Ogoni people were marginalized in the area of employment by Shell Petroleum Development Company. The forty Ogoni employees at the junior level were not sufficient to move the people forward. These forty junior staff could not extend help especially in the area of employment to their brothers and sisters.

This situation justifies the application of development impossibility theory in explaining oil exploration and Ogoni economy. This theory explains that in-as-much-as the Nigerian state is controlled by the ethnic majors, Ogoni people and other oil producing minorities will continue to be placed on the unfavourable track of underdevelopment because as the ethnic majors of the Nigerian state take the oil rich resources of the area, they exploit and expropriate them for the benefits of the regions they occupy. As explained by this theory, whoever captures the Nigerian state captures the environment and the rich resources of the area for the benefits of his region. This situation explains why Ogoni people were not represented at the senior cadre in Shell Petroleum Development Company. This explains why insignificant number of them was seen among the junior staff of Shell Petroleum Development Company as at 1997 even when the oil rich resource leading to such employment is in their land. This impoverished the people within the period under study and placed the people on the ugly track of underdevelopment as oil exploration greatly reduced the productivity or fertility of their agricultural land which rendered them unemployed in their traditional economy without adequate compensation for rendering them unemployed economically.

While the Ogoni people suffered this within this period, other ethnic majors like the Yoruba and Igbo benefitted as many of them were among the junior and senior staff in 1997 in Shell Petroleum Development Company as stated in the two tables given above. Based on this

explanation, within the period under review, oil exploration is considered as a vector of negative economic change to the Ogoni people.

### **Oil Exploration and Ogoni Agriculture**

In the course of exploring oil in Nigeria, Ogoni people have been negatively affected such that Ogoni which was before oil exploration called "the food basket" was within the period under review seen to be characterized by scarcity of food.

To give credence to the point stated above, seismic shootings employed by Shell Petroleum Development Company during oil exploration negatively affect their soil. When these explosives are released into the soil, serious shock waves and vibrations associated with these seismic shootings destroy the geology of the area. In the process, layers of the earth crust are destroyed such that they cannot support the soil effectively. As a result of this, the soil becomes loose and becomes vulnerable to wind, rain and sun erosions and leaching which drains the people's soil of its nutrients. This condition of the people's soil led to low crop yield within the period under review.

Again, during oil spillage, the oxygen content of the soil is not being used by crops. This is because the oil alters the physical structure of the soil such that its capacity to store moisture and air is reduced and even plants and crops roots are smothered such that gaseous exchange becomes difficult. This affected negatively the growth of crops which further resulted in low agricultural productivity.

During oil spillage, oil also travels into the intercellular spaces and possibly in the vascular system of plants. During this process, the cell membranes are damaged by the penetration of hydrocarbon molecules which results in the leakage of the cells. This negatively affected plant growth and resulted in low agricultural productivity within the period under review<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, oil spillage also reduces transpiration rate in

crops by blocking the stomata and intercellular spaces within the period under review. Oil also reduced photosynthetic activities. All these caused stunted growth and defoliation in crops which negatively affected farmers productivity.

Oil spillage has also destroyed agricultural land. The acres of land affected are no longer useful for agricultural purpose. Vast acres of land between Zaakpon and Luawii in Babbe in Khana Local Government Area were affected in 1996 by oil spillage and these acres of land are no longer useful for agriculture till today. The same oil spillage occurred in Korokoro Tai in Tai Local Government Area on the 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1993 and destroyed acres of cassava and raffia palm tapping settlement<sup>7</sup>. This also led to the death of one boy named Ue-Bari Nnaa who was aged 18. This was because the armed escort that followed Shell Petroleum Development Company's investigating team fired bullets on the street and the boy named above became a victim. Oil spillage also occurred in August, 1993 in Yorla. This spread to areas like Bua, Gwara, Baen, Dubulo, Luubara and Luuwa. This oil spillage wasted vast acres of agricultural land.

That vast acres of agricultural land have been wasted by oil spillage, the people experienced increased pressure on agricultural land during the period under review. This made the people reduce their fallow period from seven years to four years, three years and two years. As agricultural land was wasted by oil spillage, agricultural productivity was also drastically reduced which led to high food scarcity in the area within the period under review. Based on the above explanation, oil exploration has been seen as a vector of soil infertility and land hunger which led to poor or low agricultural productivity within the period under review.

At the same time, some communities in Ogoniland have been heavily criss-crossed by high pressure oil pipelines. These high pressure oil pipelines are not buried but are laid on the surface of the farmland of the affected communities. Communities affected here are Korokoro and

Botem in Tai Local Government Area, K. Dere in Gokana Local Government Area and Kono-Bo-ue in Khana Local Government Area. This reduced land available for agricultural productivity within the period under study. Consequently, the people suffered land hunger and hunger within the period of this study. This situation made Nicholas Ashton Jones (a British agronomist and environmentalist who spent four months in Ogoni) report that the pipelines are old and poorly maintained by Shell Petroleum Development Company and they were responsible for three leakages he detected at Botem-Tai in 1994. He added by saying that Shell Petroleum Development Company is not willing to face the problems its presence has created beyond a cosmetic attempt to tidy up its images.<sup>8</sup>

In Eleme, up to 12 persons had died in Ebubu due to oil spillage and one of these victims was John Onugwe who was tapping raffia palm tree at the time of the incident<sup>9</sup>. In Ogale, there were four cases of oil spillage between January, 1993 and December, 1994.<sup>10</sup>

Another way oil exploration has brought about land hunger leading to low agricultural productivity, hunger and poverty is by converting agricultural land into oil wells, oil fields and flow stations<sup>11</sup>. These occupy vast land which is no longer useful for agriculture as the nutrient content of the soil of such areas is completely depleted. At the same time, there was also very low crop yield in areas close to these oil wells, flow stations and oil fields. In the face of the above situations, the people started using chemical fertilizers. At the same time, many of the farmers were not able to purchase the chemical fertilizers due to poverty which further impoverished the people within the time frame of this study.

Also interesting to note here is that Shell Petroleum Development Company always destroyed economic crops and economic trees during seismic operation or shootings as it happened in Sogho community in 1991-1992. During this period, Shell Petroleum Development Company destroyed economic crops like cassava, yam, raphia palm trees, oil palm

trees, pear trees, coconut trees and orange trees and paid as low as two naira (~~₦~~2.00) only for a stand of cassava and yam when one stand of yam could produce three tubers of yam which could cost at least N10.00 (ten naira) each as at 1991-1992. It also paid as low as one thousand naira (~~₦~~1,000.00) only for an oil palm tree, a raphia palm tree and a coconut tree. As at that time (1991-1992), a coconut tree, pear tree and orange tree could produce four thousand naira (~~₦~~4,000.00) each year against the one thousand naira (N1,000.00) only paid by Shell Petroleum Development Company for destroying each of these economic trees. This is real economic retrogression because one stand of oil palm tree which produced palm oil, palm kernel, broom and kernel oil was the equivalent of thirty thousand naira (~~₦~~30,000.00) only. Shell Petroleum Development Company's meager compensatory damages were wicked and cruel because they made the people remain at the level of subsistence which diametrically dragged down agricultural production.

In view of the above situations, the people abandoned agriculture or farming for employment in the oil industry which was more promising than the traditional occupation (farming) of the people. At the same time, employment in the oil industry was not available. This explains why many of the people moved from home to Port Harcourt and Bonny in search of employment in the oil industry. This caused scarcity of food crops and increase in the prices of food stuffs in Ogoni – the once food basket of the Niger Delta.

Due to Shell Petroleum Development Company's operations in the area, Ogoni people have been denied optimum use of their agricultural land. As a result of this, instead of United Nations estimate of four acres of land per person for survival, Ogoni has less than 0.3 acre of land per person<sup>12</sup>. This situation increased pressure on the available land because more acres of land have been used as oil fields, oil wells, flow stations, access roads to the oil wells, flow stations and oil fields and as places for



laying of high pressure oil pipelines. All these increased pressure on available land.

In another way, oil exploration also negatively affected fishing activity. During oil spillage, aquatic animals in affected swamps, rivers, rivulets, streams were destroyed. This is because oil which spilled into the streams, rivers, rivulets and swamps during this period limited oxygen exchange in the water and this caused the death of these aquatic organisms. Due to this occurrence, aquatic survivors of this pollutant moved from affected rivers, streams and rivulets to the ones not affected and some species of fish moved to deeper and offshore water where Ogoni people's fishing equipment could not reach. Aquatic environment was also polluted by hydro-carbon vapour, carbon monoxide, methane and soot emitted into the air through gas flaring and other processes. These pollutants were sent down by rain into the Ogoni streams and rivers where they killed aquatic lives<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, fish which was formerly a common source of protein in the area was no longer common in the area during the period under review and this diverted people's attention from fishing to employment in the oil sector which was not always available. This led to unemployment and chronic poverty in Ogoni within the period under review. Due to this problem, only few people were seen to have continued with fishing but their catch could not satisfy the people's demand. This situation increased the price of fish in the area within the period under review.

### **Oil Exploration and Environmental Pollution**

The purpose of this is to examine and document environmental impact of oil exploration on Ogoni people. A major argument here is that environmental damage negatively affects the lives of those in the affected areas and this demands that all stakeholders in oil exploration and exploitation in the Ogoni ethnic nationality should engage in better

environmental stewardship which will sustain the development of the ethnic nationality.

Here, it should be understood that for the environmentalists, the term sustainability is used to clarify the desired balance between economic growth and environmental preservation. Here, sustainability refers to meeting the needs of the present generation without comprising the needs of the future generations<sup>14</sup>. This makes us understand that the future growth and the overall quality of life in a given society are dependent on the quality of its environment in the form of its air, water and land which represent a common and basic heritage of all generations<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, it becomes criminal to destroy the natural endowment indiscriminately in the pursuit of short term economic benefits because it will negatively impact on both the present and future generations because the future generations have the same rights as those in the present in relation to resources and endowments. This calls for the inclusion of environmental accounting into the decision of development policy makers. The above calls for the evaluation of the impact of oil exploration on Ogoni environment.

Since the discovery of crude oil in Ogoni in 1958, Ogoni people have been steadily experiencing cases of environmental degradation and its accompaniments which include poverty. One of the observable cases of the environmental impact of the oil industry on Ogoni people is from oil spillage. Oil spillage is a by-product of petroleum exploration, exploitation, refining and marketing. This occurs when oil is accidentally discharged into the environment and waters<sup>16</sup>. Oil spillage caused rapid depletion of the fish stocks which worsened the fortune of fishermen and degraded the biomass<sup>17</sup>. Again, huge number of non-commercial macro and micro fauna and flora were also destroyed within the period<sup>18</sup>. Oil spillage especially oil on surface water prevented natural aeration and led to death of trapped marine organisms below the surface of water, contaminated food substances which became harmful to man, plants and

animals and retarded vegetational growth for a period<sup>19</sup>. To explain the retardation of vegetational growth, in 1996, oil spillage destroyed vast acres of arable land at i-eemaa in Zaakpon community in Khana Local Government Area and up till 2012, the land was no longer useful for agriculture as only shrubs were seen growing there<sup>20</sup>. Owners of these acres of land have been economically robbed of these acres of land, and this has reduced their economic performance. This has also reduced the supply of food in the area. The nutrient content of the land was depleted by this oil spillage of 1996 and the land was exposed to sun and rain erosion accompanied by loss of soil nutrients deep into the soil beyond the reach of roots of crops (leaching).

In another way, oil from leaking pipelines negatively affected the people's vegetation. This oil spilled into the mangrove swamp and caused defoliation and withering of plants. As this happened, the roots of plants were completely smothered by the oil such that soil oxygen was not absorbed by the roots and this caused oxygen starvation in plants. Through this way, valuable economic trees dried up beginning with defoliation. As valuable economic trees were destroyed, timber production reduced. Therefore, Ogoni which was a timber producing area in the 1960s and early 1970s was no longer known as a timber producing area due to oil exploration. Consequently, due to oil exploration, lumbering which was a serious sector of Ogoni economy before the era of oil exploration became out of practice within the period under review. By this, oil exploration registered negatively on the Ogoni economy within the period under review.

Ogoni environment was polluted, with Benzene Arene oxide, a putative metabolite of Benzene, a component of crude oil<sup>21</sup>. This colourless liquid hydrocarbon contaminated the water that the people drank and the people became victims of cancer. This led to the death of many people. Many of them became sick in an environment where there was no specialist hospital with medical doctors to diagnose the disease.

The absence of hospital with qualified medical doctors to diagnose the disease made the people to live with the disease. Here, it should be known that healthy men will produce a vibrant economy but the fact that many of them died and some became incapacitated, the economy was not vibrant within the period under review. Acid rain was produced by emission of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide from crude oil. This acid rain is toxic to human life. This weakened the economic performance of the people.

Also important to be noted here was that oil companies involved in crude oil exploration and refining in Ogoni carelessly discharged untreated toxic wastes into the bodies of water which were the people's only source of water. In the absence of any alternative source, the people were compelled by necessity to drink the polluted water, bathed in it and ate the poisoned fish from it. The people became exposed to several diseases like respiratory and skin diseases, cholera, virginal infection and strange ailments. As the people drank the polluted water, ate the poisoned fish, breathed in the polluted air, they were consigned to slow but sure death especially with the absence of any specialist hospitals or healthcare centres with qualified medical practioners to diagnose and treat the ailments at the early stages of their development<sup>22</sup>. This was the situation of Zor-Sogho in 1991-92 when many people died from seismic shootings which discharged harmful substances into the people's only source of water.

### **Oil Exploration and Oil induced inflation**

Oil exploration within the period under review turned the Ogoni community into the category of a most expensive community in Nigeria. The oil induced inflation was not a serious concern to the workers and contractors in this sector but it became a nightmare for peasant and subsistent fisher-forks, farmers, unemployed people and workers in the public sector like State and Federal Government ministries and

parastatals. This oil induced inflation favoured non-indigenes at the expense of indigenes because more of non-indigenes were in the oil industry than the indigenes and for this reason, much of the land in Eleme was bought by non-indigenes particularly those in oil industry. To explain this oil induced inflation, between 2010 and 2012, renting one bedroom flat in Bori and Eleme cost from one hundred and eighty thousand naira to two hundred and twenty thousand naira (₦180,000 to ₦220,000) per year while one room cost from fifty to sixty thousand naira (₦50,000 to ₦60,000)<sup>23</sup>. At the same time, between 2010 and 2012, renting 1 (one) bedroom flat and 2 bedroom flat in Awka in Anambra state cost from ₦80,000 to ₦150,000 only respectively depending on the size and location of the building<sup>24</sup>. Apart from rents, prices of other items were also affected. For example, one plot of land in Bori within 2010-2012 cost from ₦1,000,000 to ₦1,500,000 depending on the location while the same one plot of land within the same period in Auchi in Edo State cost two hundred thousand naira (₦200,000) only.

### **Oil Exploration and Rural Development**

The Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). This was established by decree number 23 in 1992<sup>25</sup> and its first chairman at state level was an Ogoni man named Late Dr. Ndeegwe A.N. This was during the regime of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and the commission was financed with three (3) percent of the country's budget. It employed few Ogoni youths but since the commission was scrapped in 1999, the employment did not register positively on them as expected<sup>26</sup> because it was short-lived.

In 1998, the decree which established Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was repealed and on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2000, Niger Delta Development Commission was established and it became a successor to Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission. This was during the regime of former President Olusegun

Obasanjo. The commission is responsible for the development of the Niger Delta.

In developing rural communities, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission completed Betem water project in Khana Local Government Area, Bara-O-Bara water project in Tai Local Government Area and started Gas Turbine power project in Eleme in 1994<sup>27</sup>. Though the Gas Turbine Power Project was completed by Rivers State Government in 1999 during the regime of former Governor (Sir) Dr. Peter Odili but it did not last. These water projects in these two Ogoni communities increased the output of those in catering business and they got customers from neighbouring villages. This increased their profit maximization. The water projects did not last as the commission did not maintain the projects. Even water project in Okwale Community (a community in Khana Local Government Area) was also abandoned.

In 2002, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) electrified Gwara and Kaa at the cost of N12,103,340.00 (twelve million, one hundred and three thousand, three hundred and forty naira only<sup>28</sup>. This rural electrification economically empowered many youths because many youths went into barbing saloon business. Despite this, the problem these youths encountered was irregular power supply and this negatively impacted on the people.

Still within the same period, Niger Delta Development Commission also built 26 market stores and lockup shops at Kaa<sup>29</sup>. These boosted economic performance of the people as these lockup shops and market stores increased exchange.

Niger Delta Development Commission also constructed the Nonwa-Bunu-Koroma road in Tai Local Government Area, Bomu-Giokoo-We-ol road in 2002. These roads made it easy for the people to transport their products from one place to another and the roads made buyers to have

access to products produced in these communities. These roads prevented wasting of valuable economic products.

Within the period under review, Niger Delta Development Commission also went into road transport scheme in which the commission provided buses to convey passengers from Port Harcourt to Bori<sup>30</sup>. These buses helped to transport people and their products to Port Harcourt for sale. These buses helped to transport buyers of their products from Port Harcourt to Bori for purchase of the people's products. But within a short time, these buses were out of road due to poor maintenance.

From the above, it is clear that what Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) did within the period under review could not solve the people's problems because many of the people were still on poverty track resulting from oil exploration. Based on the above, this study states that they were not able to embark on vibrant economic models which would have stimulated sustainable development in the area.

### **Oil Exploration and Conflicts and Social Vices**

Ogoni people at the start of oil exploration expected it to develop them but it later turned to be a weapon of destruction through crude oil related crises as stated below.

a) **Wilbros Laying of oil Pipelines Crisis of 1993:** Shell Petroleum Development Company awarded a contract of laying of oil pipelines from Bomu oil field to the North across the River Niger to Wilbros, an American oil servicing company. Wilbros swung into action by bulldozing forests, farmland and crops in Biara village on the 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1993 under the protection of well armed Nigerian soldiers<sup>31</sup>. Before Wilbros swung into action on that very day, the affected communities were not informed. By this contract, the affected communities would have their land and crops

destroyed. Consequently, on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1993, some people from the affected communities organized themselves and protested against the destruction of their crops and farmland. Because of this protest, a farmer named Barinee Bodo involved in the protest was thoroughly beaten by the armed Nigerian soldiers. Again, when miss K. Kogbara wept and cursed the soldiers for being ruthless in destroying her crops and land, the armed Nigerian soldiers beat and wounded the lady brutally<sup>32</sup>.

The next morning, thousands of Ogoni protesters marched to the scene of the incident emass with cassava leaves in their hands to protest the sadistic dehumanization but peacefully told Wilbros and the soldiers to stop work because Ogoni life is on farmland which they were destroying. The people blocked the path of the bulldozers. Reacting to this protest, the armed Nigerian soldiers opened bullets on defenceless Ogoni people which made many of the protesters sustain wounds which involved life disability and many suffered untimely death. Mr. Agbarator Friday Otu was one of those who died while Miss K. Kogbara survived the wounds but her left hand was amputated<sup>33</sup>. Others involved in the death casualties were NenninBari Paa, Sunday Giadom and Baribe Tanee of Biara Gokana<sup>34</sup>. Even if Wilbros does not compromise on safety of equipment and men of the company, there was no good reason for the armed Nigerian soldiers to open bullets on defenceless Ogoni people when Wilbros men and equipment were unharmed. It should be understood here that earlier in January, 1993, Shell Petroleum Development Company had suspended operations in Ogoni for what the company called threats to staff and equipment but what made the company renew operations in April in that same year is what this study calls "a calculated attempt to kill Ogoni people".

The impact of this on the economic life of the people was that the crisis increased the economic burden of the people as the economic burden of the families of those who died was transferred to those living. At the same time, as many of the people who died and sustained wounds



were in their active age, the people were denied the human force that would have moved the economy forward as the victims were internal vibrant economic players whose efforts would have helped to put the people on the path of economic development.

b) **Andoni-Ogoni Crisis of 1993**: The cruelty and naked oppression noticed above was followed by the Andoni/Ogoni crisis which began on the 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1993. This crisis was fueled by both Federal, State Governments and Shell Petroleum Development Company to unleash their anger on the defenceless Ogoni people for not permitting Shell Petroleum Development Company to continue operations on their land. This attack and invasion of Ogoni communities in the name of communal clash claimed many lives, wounded many persons and rendered thousands of persons homeless. Federal Government of Nigeria was said to have fueled this crisis in order to pave way for their penetration because the Andoni troops were well armed and kitted in Nigerian military uniform<sup>35</sup>.

For the Andoni troops to have gotten access to the uniform of Nigerian soldiers means that Federal Government was on the side of Andoni people. This was done to remove Ogoni barriers to oil exploration. To further prove the involvement of Federal Government and State Government in the attack on Ogoni, the government set up "Rivers State Peace Conference Committee" under the headship of late professor Ake Claude to mediate between the two communities against the "Commission of Inquiry" demanded by the two warring communities.

The situation made the late Professor Ake Claude to be dissatisfied with the arrangement and pulled out of the signing of peace accord. As he pulled out, he commented that the scale and systematic nature of destruction as well as the sophisticated nature of military operations carried out by Andoni people against Ogoni people demonstrated that it was not a mere communal clash but an attack and the two innocent communities (Ogoni and Andoni) were victims of other forces which were

fueled by internal situations<sup>36</sup>. Shell Petroleum Development Company and Chevron were said to have participated in the crisis as some of the boats captured from Andoni people by Ogoni troops had shell B.P and Chevron written on them. This explains why late professor Claude Ake explained that the two innocent communities were victims of other forces that were fueled by internal situations.

c) **Ogoni-Oyigbo Crisis of 1994:** The Andoni/Ogoni crisis was followed by the Ogoni/Oyigbo border crisis which started on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1994. The information gathered from the soldiers who carried out the waste operations stated that security information sent to Abuja was that 10,000 armed Ogoni youths were sent by Ogoni people to destroy the Afam power station and other oil installations. This complaint was given by former Military Governor of Rivers state, Lieutenant Colonel Dauda Musa Komo and the Federal Government reacted by sending armed Nigerian soldiers to the area. Consequently, between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1994, over 800 Ogoni men, women and children were massacred. Many were rendered homeless, villages like Oloko I and II, Okoloma I and II, Nwemkora, Mumba, Tumbee, Gbaken and Boobe were destroyed, girls and women were raped and property worth millions of naira was looted and destroyed<sup>37</sup>. The information given to Federal Military Government by former Military Governor of Rivers state was not true. It was premised on a calculated attempt to commit genocide against Ogoni people in order to stop them from agitating for resource control.

d) **Giokoo Crisis of 1994:** The Oyigbo/Ogoni crisis was followed by the Giokoo crisis of 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1994. It went that on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1994, there was a MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people) rally scheduled to start from Sogho to Beerli and to end at Gokana. The rally was for election of delegates for the 1995 National Constitutional Conference. Due to this rally, late Ken Saro-Wiwa and his entourage went to Luusue-Sogho to address the people on who was to be elected for the National Constitutional Conference but was denied access to Luusue-

Sogho by armed Nigerian soldiers. This was because two days to the day of the rally, the places that were to be visited were militarized by Nigerian Federal Military troops through the faction of MOSOP that was against Ken Saro Wiwa's attending the National Constitutional Conference.

As he was denied access to Luusue-Sogho, he left for Bori for a seminar scheduled for that day but he was denied access to the venue of the seminar by Nigerian soldiers. Denied access to the venue of the seminar at Bori, he headed to Gokana in a convoy of three cars for the campaign for the delegate election for the National Constitutional Conference. While he was going to Gokana, his convoy was overtaken by armed soldiers in their truck. They alighted from their truck, blocked the road and ordered him to reverse on the grounds that his campaign was not supposed to go beyond his ward. Consequently, he went back to Port Harcourt under the escort of armed Nigerian soldiers. Here, it should be understood that there was a gathering at Gokana which was claimed to have been for the reception of late Dr. Barinem Kiobel, a serving commissioner in the administration of Lieutenant Colonel Dauda Musa Komo. This was venued at Gokana on the 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1994.

As Gokana youths heard that late Ken Saro Wiwa had been prevented from campaigning in Gokana, the angry youths moved to the venue of Gokana meeting to carry out a most barbaric and sadistic act against humanity by killing their elders namely Chief Albert Badey, Chief Edward Kobani, Samuel Orage and Theophilus Orage who according to them were among those used by Federal Government to create division in the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP).

The argument here is that the Giokoo meeting was not principally for the reception of late Dr. Barinem Kiobel but to work out strategies that would prevent late Ken Saro Wiwa from attending the National Constitutional Conference<sup>38</sup>. The same source added that while the meeting was going on, the said late Dr. Barinem Kiobel came and

surveyed the place and walked away and when some people were hiding in the shrine of Gberesaako as the youths launched their attack, the same late Dr. Barinem Kiobel came out to address the angry youths. Based on this, if the Giokoo meeting had been a meeting for the reception of late Dr. Barinem Kiobel, he would have sat among his brothers in the meeting. He would not have walked away as he did.

Due to the Giokoo crisis which claimed the lives of four prominent Ogoni men, Internal Security Task Force was set up by government to keep peace and order among the people but the Internal Security Task Force destroyed peace and unleashed violence and disorder on the people. The Internal Security Task Force was made up of 400 military personnel and the commander was Major Paul Okuntimo. Right from the time the Internal Security Task Force started operation, economic activities stagnated, houses were burnt, people became bush animals as they were driven out of their homes by the military men. There were outbreaks of diseases, hunger, high death rate from military gunshots, unnecessary arrest and detention, brutalization of innocent people, looting of property, intimidation and torture and raping of girls and women. Ogoni land became a place where trained and armed Nigerian soldiers carried out waste operations.

The most significant fallouts of this Giokoo crisis were the unlawful arrest, trial and death of late Ken Saro Wiwa and eight others on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1995. To ensure that Ken Saro Wiwa was summarily dealt with, Federal Government bribed some Ogoni indigenes to bear false witness against late Ken Saro Wiwa alleging that he instructed the youths to kill the Ogoni four at Giokoo. To give credence to this, Mr. Danwi Charles and Mr. Nyone Nkpa testified that they were bribed with ₦30, 000 (thirty thousand naira) each, a house, a contract from Shell Petroleum Development Company and Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission and monthly salary of level 05 officer of Gokana Local Government Council without being an employee of the council<sup>39</sup>.

Consequently, the occupation of Ogoni by Internal Security Task Force made life meaningless, insecure and uncomfortable such that the people had to appeal to International Communities for assistance. In response, especially United States of America opened a refugee camp at Benin Republic for the oppressed and suppressed Ogoni people who had been sealed up in the flames of dry injustice. They saw this and breathed a tremor of relief. Consequently, between January and April 1996, over 50 Ogoni youths were arrested at the border by Nigerian security operatives. In all, over 2,000 Ogoni families are now residing in Western Europe and North America.

At this point, this study will assess the impact of this Western emigration on Ogoni economy.

A most interesting point to be noted here is that the Ogoni economy during this period suffered serious capital outflow. This happened because the Ogoni youths who emigrated to Western Europe went with huge amount of money that was to take care of them during their stay at Benin Republic. Some parents even sold some plots of land for the purpose but unfortunately, this money was not spent in Ogoni economy but in Benin Republic. As the money was not invested in Ogoni economy, Ogoni economy suffered great capital outflow which reduced investments and economic production.

Furthermore, this Western emigration also reduced agricultural production. These youths who embarked on western emigration were those who could have boosted agricultural production because the aged sector of the Ogoni population could not do much to increase agricultural production. Other economic activities were also negatively affected.

Nevertheless, Ogoni Western emigration also retarded progress in many villages of Ogoni. In every society, youths are those who bring about improvement and social progress while the old people are usually conservative. Consequently, this hampered social progress in Ogoni

community as it was characterized by exodus of the youths to a high capital and technologically based economy where they did not have the economic and educational requirements to function effectively. This is because many of them were university dropouts, holders of first school leaving certificate and West African Senior School Certificate. This explains why many of their parents wallowed in poverty at home.

Due to the 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1994 crisis, Michael T., Vizor Paul Levula, Paul Deedor, Monday Okepiam, Daniel Gbokoo, Cyprian Lekoo Kpenu, Popgbara Zor-zor, Baridorn Nazigha, Blessing Israel, Abere Papa, Sampson Ntiginee, Barilule Lebe, Niada Nasikpo, Samuel Asigha, Saturday Doobee, Clement Tusima, Innocent Tonwee, Popgbara A-faa, Kagbara Albert, Adam Kaa, Friday Gburuma, Godwin Gbodor, John Banatu and Michael Doghala were arrested and detained unlawfully in military custody<sup>40</sup>.

This confirms that this was a period characterized by unlawful detention, which stagnated positive economic activities. From the above, it is clear that instead of oil exploration to be a blessing to the people, it became curse to them. Based on this, it was impossible to develop the people through oil exploration. Here, the concepts of development impossibility and resource curse become applicable.

The following were victims of extortion and robbery by the Internal Security Task Force within the period of its operation.

**Table 4.4: Victims of extortion and robbery by the Internal Security Task Force**

<b>Names of Victims</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Amount Extorted</b>
Sonayee Karagbara	Kpean	₦5,000.00
Efeenia Nwibani	Kpean	₦5,000.00
Charley Kikoh	Kpean	₦5,000.00
Ngozi Ndee	Kpean	₦8,000.00
Lekpoa Neebara	Okwale	₦5,000.00
Adoge Bunaa-ee	Okwale	₦5,000.00
Effiong Ndeh	Okwale	₦80,000.00
Chief Mmue Ndorbue	Okwale	2 live goats

Mbasi Mmue	Okwale	1 drug store looted and 1 live goat
Lazarus Saale	Okwale	₦28,000.00
Naatos Mmue	Okwale	Could not pay ransom and had all household property destroyed.
Rowland Akeke	Okwale	A lorry load of foodstuffs confiscated and taken to Kpor
Ngozi Mbiabu	Teka-Sogho	₦5,000.00
Nteekor Diagbara	Yeghe	2 live goats
Friday Teekate	Bane	₦7,000.00
Ogerebu Yorke	Bane	₦7,000.00
Michael Karikpo	Bane	₦7,000.00
NeeBari Nwidor	Bane	Could not pay ransom but had all household property destroyed.
Monday Oke	Bane	₦7,000.00
Sorle Oyor	Bane	₦10,000.00
Deebom Togonee	Bane	₦7,000.00
Gbara Prayer	Bane	₦3,000.00
Kor-eeba Akpa	Taabaa	₦5,000.00
Gogo Kanee	Sii	₦6,000.00
Baninalle Nwalor	Sii	Many live goats and fowls
Gbo Ikobunee	Sii	All household property and house were burnt
Nyene Emmanuel	Zor-Sogho	A television set, standing fans and a generating set were looted
IkpoBari Senewo	Bane	Books, a television set, standing fans, radio set and all clothings were burnt
Nyooba Friday	Luubara	₦8,000.00 and suffered unlawful detention at Kpor military camp for a long period.
Eddy Nwikommah		Arrested, tortured, detained and released after payment of ₦26,000.00 only despite huge amount of money stolen from his house
Barizoge LeBari		Arrested, tortured and released on payment of ₦10,000.00

**Source:** Oral interviews with Maekae, Psalm on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2015, aged 62, a retired Civil Servant, active member of MOSOP, from Zor-Sogho in Khana Local Government Area in Rivers State and Nyene Nathaniel, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015, aged 59, a retired soldier, from Zor-Sogho in Khana Local Government Area in Rivers State.<sup>41</sup>.

**Table 4.5: Names of some Ogoni people who died during the operations of Internal Security Task Force in the area in 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998**

<b>Names of victims</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Nature of Death</b>
Kpakol Joseph	Bodo-Gokana	Arrested on a Sunday evening and beaten to death on the way to Port Harcourt.
Tombari Deenu	Bera-Gokana	Shot dead on January 4 <sup>th</sup> , 1997.
Chief Tigidam S.T	Zaakpon	A third class chief tortured to death on 4 <sup>th</sup> January, 1996 by the Internal Security Task Force.
Luboo Ibe	Yeghe	Shot dead by a soldier on 21 <sup>st</sup> January, 1997 at a roadblock mounted by Nigerian soldiers at Yeghe.
Asiga Samuel	Mogho-Gokana	Shot dead by Nigerian soldiers along Afam road on his way to see Ogoni detainees on 11 <sup>th</sup> February 1997.
Barile Ikogbara	Luuyor-Gwara	Shot dead instantly on 12 <sup>th</sup> July, 1997.
Baridi Kpolobe and one Ledisi	Biara	Shot dead in a bus travelling from Port Harcourt to Bori for the driver's failure to give the men of the Internal Security Task Force ₦20.00.
Nwitoge Zua Tee	Kaani I	Shot in the chest and died instantly on January 4 <sup>th</sup> 1997.
Nkpagayeh Michael	Zor-Sogho	Arrested, tortured and released in June, 1997, re-arrested and tortured to death on 27 <sup>th</sup> August 1998.
Gbarabe Lucky .N.	Uegwere Bo-ue	Shot at the back of the head by a member of Rivers State Internal Security Task Force on the 4 <sup>th</sup> January, 1996 and corps was thrown into Kalaoko/Akwa Ibom River but discovered on the 7 <sup>th</sup> January 1996.
Kpanen Nicodemus (A student)	Luyor Gwara	Shot in lower abdomen, rushed to University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital but died on the 6 <sup>th</sup> January 1996.
Albert Baddey	Bodo-Gokana	murdered in cold blood by angry mob on 21 <sup>st</sup> May, 1994 at



		Giokoo.
Chief Edward Kobani	Bodo-Gokana	Murdered in cold blood by angry mob on 21 <sup>st</sup> May, 1994 at Giokoo.
Orage Samuel	Bomu	Murdered in cold blood by angry mob on 21 <sup>st</sup> May, 1994 at Giokoo.
Orage Theophilus	Bomu	Murdered in cold blood by angry mob at Giokoo on the 21 <sup>st</sup> May, 1994.
Kenule Saro Wiwa	Bane	Hanged on November 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1995.
Dr. Brinem Kiobel	Beera	Hanged on 10 <sup>th</sup> November, 1995.
Levura Paul	Beera	Hanged on 10 <sup>th</sup> November, 1995.
Nuate Felix	Beera	Hanged on November 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1995.
Kpuinen John	Beera	Hanged on 10 <sup>th</sup> November, 1995.
Bera Baribor	Beera	Hanged on 10 <sup>th</sup> November, 1995.
Nyordee Saturday		Hanged on November 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1995.
Nordu Iyenwin		Hanged on 10 <sup>th</sup> November, 1995.
Gbokoo David		Hanged on 10 <sup>th</sup> November, 1995.

**Sources:** Amanyie, ....2001, 162-175 and Maekae, Psalm, oral interview on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2015, aged 62, retired civil servant, active member of MOSOP, from Zor-Sogho in Khana Local Government Area in Rivers State<sup>42</sup>.

From the above, it is clear that the people's property and money were stolen and destroyed. They were unnecessarily arrested, tortured and killed in cold blood. One thing clear here is that no meaningful economic production will take place in an environment characterized by outright vandalization of property, looting of money, arrest, torture, unlawful detention of human beings and killing of innocent people. These impacted negatively on the people's economy as it witnessed economic stagnation as the traditional economic players were never given the enabling economic environment that would make them become vibrant

economic actors in the economy. Moreso, as property worth millions of naira and money were destroyed and stolen by armed soldiers of the Internal Security Task Force, the people were denied the necessary economic essentials needed for moving the economy forward. Consequently, the economy suffered economic strangulations as internal economic players were forced out of business and this further, impoverished already poor people. At this point, it is clear that development was impossible through oil exploration and the oil resource of the people became curses to them. The concept of gillette syndrome as explained in the conceptual clarification is at work here as the people became victims of unnecessary crimes from the same thing that gave economic boom to Federal Government of Nigeria.

Also important to be mentioned here as one of the oil related crisis is the Kpor versus Mogho crisis of 2001. This crisis took place when pipeline vandalization was on in Gokana Local Government Area. The stolen crude was always sold to buyers with tankers which could take up to 33,000 litres while boys from the community where this took place always collected "Marching Grant" from buyers of the crude oil.

Money called "Marching Grant" was shared by Mogho and Kpor boys who committed this oil pipeline vandalization. Unfortunately, on the part of Mogho, Kpor boys outnumbered them such that the greater part of the money was always taken by Kpor boys. Smaller amount of the money given to Mogho boys was the cause of minor fracas between Mogho boys and Kpor boys (those involved in the business) in which Kpor boys overpowered Mogho boys and at the same time went ahead to burn four (4) houses in Mogho community<sup>43</sup>. The same source reports that in reaction, Mogho boys reinforced, entered Kpor community and within one hour, forty-five minutes, Mogho boys burnt  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Kpor community and four boys from Kpor were taken captive while many others sustained fatal wound which involved life or some years disability.

Later, this crisis was stopped by youths from K. Dere, Bomu and B. Dere communities. These few months of cascading bloodbath destroyed the peace and unity that had existed between Mogho and Kpor communities and as well as in Gokana Local Government Area. This period of crisis characterized by life casualties and destruction of property also negatively impacted on the people's economy as many shops and provision stores were burnt and looted. These acts made many people to be out of business and rendered them economically unuseful.

The point stressed here is that, if Shell Petroleum Development Company had employed the people after rendering them unemployed by using their only source of livelihood (Land) for oil exploration, these boys would not have engaged in pipeline vandalization which further led to months of cascading blood-bath due to disagreement on sharing of the "Marching Grant". As they were rendered economically unemployed and they never saw any economic good fortune coming from those who had rendered them economically unemployed in their economy, they were only left with committing economic crime of crude oil pipeline vandalization as a way of survival.

In the area of social vices, oil exploration within the period under study engendered a rapid decline in moral rectitude, traditional morality and social values. First to be considered here was that the relatively large population of unmarried, sex starved immigrants who were financially buoyant in rural village where they met impoverished ladies with new appetite for the petro-naira from the sex-starved immigrants of the oil companies led to a higher level of promiscuity, prostitution, spread of venereal diseases and broken marriages. To substantiate this claim, in 1991, during seismic shootings carried out by Shell Petroleum Development Company in Sogho community, these sex starved young unmarried, immigrant staffs of Shell Petroleum Development Company seduced many young unmarried girls and married women with their petro-naira into promiscuity, prostitution and adultery which ruined the

moral foundation of this community. The petro-naira first made them victims of psychological oppression before committing the social vices. In Niger Delta generally, Asewo village Located adjacent the Nembe Creek flow station in Bayelsa State and Akusu I and II located at the outskirts of Bonny in Rivers State are good examples of how oil exploration has ruined or destroyed the moral rectitude of the Niger Delta people<sup>44</sup>.

Also important was that many of the immigrants who were disappointed in getting the oil company job, resorted to unorthodox ways of survival which include stealing and other deviant activities. From this, they introduced many unemployed Ogoni youths into other social and economic vices like hiding some equipment of Shell Petroleum Development Company and at the same time telling Shell Petroleum Development Company to use them to recover the missing equipment on payment of huge amount of money<sup>45</sup>.

One cannot completely say that oil exploration and production did not offer any good opportunity to the Ogoni people. The argument here is that the opportunities offered were marginal compared to what Federal Government and Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) got from the area.

In the first place, Shell Petroleum Development Company employed some Ogoni people but the positions given to the people could not move the people forward as shown in the tables stated above. Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) employed upto 45 (forty-five) Ogoni indigenes but none of them rose to the rank of director. This did not make Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) impact meaningfully on the people.

Four Ogoni indigenes (2 from Gokana and 2 from Khana) benefitted the sum of one million, two hundred and seventy-nine thousand, two

hundred and sixteen naira (~~₦~~1,279,216.00) as Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission's (OMPADEC) Assisted Mass Transist Scheme<sup>46</sup>. The problem here was that the beneficiaries were not able to sustain this scheme and after a short period, the scheme crashed.

Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) gave five hundred thousand (~~₦~~500,000.00) to nine (9) persons from Gokana Local Government, four hundred thousand naira (~~₦~~400,000.00) to ten (10) persons from Tai-Elеме Local Government Area as Small Scale Trade Assistance Loan Scheme in 1993<sup>47</sup>. The point explained here is that the amount given to them was too minute to impact positively on the people. For example, the nine (9) persons from Gokana given ~~₦~~500,000.00 got ₦55,555.00 each, the eight (8) persons from Khana Local Government Area given ~~₦~~400,000.00 got ₦50,000.00 each and the ten (10) persons from Tai-Elеме Local Government Area given ~~₦~~400,000.00 got ₦40,000.00 each. This was too meager for the people to make a start and for this reason, it did not positively impact on the people.

Shell Petroleum Development Company embarked on community road construction in 2000 and constructed 12.5 kilometres roads in Tai community, 4.6 kilometres roads in Ogale in Elеме, 29.2 kilometres roads in Gokana and 31.4 kilometres roads in Khana<sup>48</sup>. These roads were not maintained after construction and some of them were constructed with sub-standard materials. It should be understood that these roads do not have drainage system and by 2012, they were no longer motorable. Consequently, they were not able to register positively on the economic fortune of the people.

It is important to state that Ogoni chiefs never played any negative role in the oil sector. Chiefs were not at anytime given any money for development of the area by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and state government. All that Shell Petroleum Development

Company (SPDC) did was to give Christmas gifts in the form of live cows, bags of rice, tins of groundnut oil, cartons of tomato and packets of maggi to chiefs<sup>49</sup>. These items given to chiefs only increased consumption at the expense of development. These items never contributed to the development of the people because they were use values. Consequently, they helped to deepen the underdevelopment of the people.

Based on the above, oil exploration and production did more harm than good within the period under review.

From the above highlighted points, it is clear that oil exploration destroyed the people's economic activities, engendered crises which further impoverished the people and also destroyed the moral foundation of the people. Consequently, oil exploration is seen more as a vector of negative economic changes than positive economic changes. From the above, it is clear that Gillette Syndrome, Paradox of Plenty and Resource Curse as explained in conceptual clarification play significant roles in this explanation.

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45. Asukpughi Francis Tordee, oral interview on the 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2016, aged 58, a staff of Niger Delta Basin Development Authority, Port Harcourt, from Zor Sogho community in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
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48. People and Environment, SPDC Annual Report, 2000, 46.
49. Chief, F.E. Amasi-tito, oral interview on the 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2016, aged 58, from Agbata in Eleme Local Government Area, Rivers State, HRH, GNK Gininwa, first class chief, oral interview on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2015, aged 72, from Korokoro in Tai Local Government Area in Rivers State and Osaro George a farmer from Ebubu in Eleme Local Government Area in Rivers State.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **LAND USE ACT AND OGO NI ECONOMY**

#### **Introduction**

Land is very important in the life of every human being as it is indispensable to economic survival and economic enrichment<sup>1</sup>. This chapter examines traditional land holding system before the Land Use Act of 1978. For proper explanation, the Land Use Act itself, basic objectives of the Land Use Act, ideological and philosophical basis of the Land Use Act, and the Nigerian Constitution and application of the Land Use Act in Ogoni are the basic points of discussion.

This chapter documents that the Land Use Act, denied the Ogoni people the rights to own land and the resources contained therein and this led to outright economic disempowerment and reduced the people to the status of squatters as the Act made them mere land occupiers and not owners. This is against the right of individuals to own immovable property as enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution. As they could not own land, they could not enrich themselves economically with the wealth of their land as the Act is designed to extract every bit of wealth from their land. Consequently, the people wallowed on the track of abject poverty, crises and suffering.

#### **Traditional Land Tenure System in Ogoni before the Land Use Act of 1978**

Land is very important in the economic and social lives of Ogoni people. In traditional economic organization, it is said to be the source of economic enrichment and economic survival. Being considered very important, it was held in the following ways before the introduction of the Land Use Act in 1978.

- a) **Communal Land Holding System:** Communal land tenure system refers to land whose ownership or ownership right is vested in the

indigenes of a community. This system of land holding included farmland, land where economic trees like palm trees and rubber trees are, burial grounds and evil forests. These land, forests and burial grounds were found in Sogho, Okwali, Luebe, Lorre, Kpite, Ue-Ken and other Ogoni communities. In Zor-Sogho, there were the "Kue-taa" (evil forest) used as cemetery for those who died by accidents, Gbara-Gbara farmland, Dumemaa farmland and the Ataagbara deity forest which were communally owned by every person in the community<sup>2</sup>. There were also sacred forests or groves in Luusue-Sogho where no one farmed but were used as sites of communal shrines controlled by the priests of the different deities in the community. These were not owned by a particular family but belonged to every person in the community<sup>3</sup>. Here, it should be understood that control of communal land was vested in the council of elders of the respective villages and during farming season, interested indigenes farmed on communally owned farmland.

- b) **Family Land Holding System:** This was another land tenure system in Ogoni before the introduction of Land Use Act in 1978. Family land appears slightly less loose than communal land<sup>4</sup>. Family land is described here as land in which a small kin group, extended family unit or house group possesses common rights of which every adult male of that unit possesses rights to farm on a particular portion every year in accordance with the rotational cycle<sup>5</sup>. Members of the extended group inherited the land from their ancestors through whom they descended. Under this land tenure system, land was divided among small numbers of kinsmen and members of an extended family. The extended family or a house group was normally broken up into a number of smaller land owning groups.

It should be understood that family land constituted an integral part of shifting cultivation system. In family land holding system, the normal cycle of cultivation and fallow vary between five and seven

years. As argued by Green, each man farmed on his share of the land himself and owned the produce himself<sup>6</sup>. The man also called in some of his relatives or friends to help when he had serious work of bush clearing and hoeing and in return, he helped them another day. This was merely a voluntary work and apart from this, to have the work easily done, there was cooperative work between children and parents and between husbands and wives.

There were certain problems associated with the family land tenure system. One of these problems was that a family could expand to consist of more members but the land at the disposal of the family remained static. Again, with increasing population, the pull was in the direction of individual control and ultimately individual ownership rights. This became pronounced from the colonial period which introduced capitalism characterized by capitalist accumulation.

c) **Personal Land Holding System**

Generally, personal land refers to landlord's rights over land. Specifically, personal land holding system refers to land which an individual had inherited or otherwise acquired and it was at his personal disposal and not subject to family or common sanction. Another way personal land was acquired was by clearing a virgin forest and after this, it would become personal land of whoever cleared the virgin forest?

In personal land holding system, each man cultivated his plots of land himself and owned the produce. Very interesting in this land tenure system was that there was nothing that approximated to the well known traditional conception of a holding in fee simple which carried with it the right of an individual to sell outright, land to any willing buyer. It was believed that the individual held the land in trust for future generations. This justifies why Green in his "Land Tenure in an Igbo village" states that one of the most fundamental bases of native law and custom is that land cannot be outright alienated<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, the only titles to permanent

ownership of land were inheritance and clearing of virgin forest but they did not grant anybody the right to alienate land irrevocably.

The system of inheritance ensured that ownership rights over personal land were transferred to the sons of the right holder at his death. The sons would then have personal right over their shares of the subdivided land area. Personal land was only inherited by brothers and uncles of the right holder when the right holder died without surviving sons. In Ogoni land tenure system, this custom reduced cases of land crises as it was known and believed that personal land was always inherited by the sons of the right holder at his death. But at present, there has been a change as the community is all the same in the throes of outright alienation of personal land in response to the awareness of the cash value of land due to monetization of Ogoni economy by colonialism.

#### d) **Pledge Land Holding System**

In the pre-1978 Ogoni community, land was also acquired through pledge. This system developed out of considerable pressure of population growth on the land. Acquisition of pledged land constituted one of the various means by which certain rights over land could be temporality transferred from one person to another. "Bere-Nam" as it was called in Ogoni made for flexibility in land management. It was also a means through which surplus land could be temporarily transferred to someone other than the owner who needed the use of it. Here, the pledge tenant employed the option to meet immediate land need either as a result of shortage of land, poor quality of available land and the financial need of the pledgor. Through this way, it offered an alternative to outright alienation of land<sup>9</sup>.

One important thing here is that both personal land and land held in common may become subject to pledge. Here, a member of a family land owning group who wanted to pledge a piece of land ought, according to custom and native law consulted other members of the group before

doing so. The money the pledgor would receive would be his and not shared with his co-land owners. Naturally, the later expected him to redeem the land in due course. The essence of the pledge was that it was redeemable at anytime subject to the provision that crops growing must have been harvested on payment of the original pledge sum. In this system of land tenure, a pledge tenant had no right over the fruit of trees unless he made special arrangement with the owner to this effect. It is also correct to say that land gotten on pledge would be kept for an indefinite time until when the owner or the pledgor's heirs would wish to redeem it. Therefore, when pledgor or his heirs would bring the original pledge sum, either the pledge tenant or his heirs would be duty-bound to take back the pledge sum and return the land.

Here, the pledge tenant was protected against sudden or unreasonable eviction, that is if the pledge tenant had some crops not harvested on the land, the land owner would wait until the crops were harvested. The inheritance of ancestral land differed from land held on pledge. The latter was treated as a man's personal property and was inherited by his heirs after his death. What his heirs (pledge tenant) inherited was the right to hold the pledge land until it was redeemed. At the same time, pledged land could lapse by default into personal land after successive generations.

e) **Leasehold**

Leasehold was another system of land tenure in Ogoni before 1978. This was called "Dorn-Nam" in Ogoni and was disparate from the pledge land tenure system as it was not terminable at the whim of the landlord and was usually for a fixed term which was not renewable. In Ogoni, the commonest form of leasehold was tenancy for one year in which the land was to be used for cultivation of yam, cassava, cocoa yam and other crops<sup>10</sup>. This land tenure system was necessitated by the unwholesome dearth of fertile land for farming purpose on the part of the lessee and for



meeting the financial need of the lessor. The lessor was expected to charge the rent sum according to the size of the land to be leased. At the end of the farming season, the lessee was expected to thank the lessor with tubers of yam, calabash of palm wine, bitter kola, kolanuts, alligator pepper and traditional salad. However, the rent sum was very meager. This was not renewable.

At the same time, a variant of this form of leasehold system was the showing of land for house building. Here, once the landowner agreed to give out the land, the house builder would occupy it for as long as he wanted but subject to good conduct. But when he was no longer willing to live there, the land would revert to the original owner. Really, the erection of buildings meant long tenancy which might ultimately change into actual ownership.

Finally, another form of land tenure system was the type in which two or more individuals exchanged plots of land to their mutual convenience as the need and requirement might arise either for farming or building purpose<sup>11</sup>. Such exchange may be permanent in cases where buildings were erected on the exchanged land and farming land was recovered by either party on demand. This system of land tenure where two or more persons exchanged plots of land for building of houses or farming is a major source of land disputes today because after a long period that this took place, future generations that do not know what happened in the past always quarrel on ownership of the exchanged plots of land. This problem has led to several cases of death in Ogoni land.

### **The Land Use Act of 1978**

During the period of the struggle for independence, Regional Governments in Southern Nigeria adopted the provisions of the 1917-1918 ordinances on land but with some modifications. The Native Land Acquisition Ordinances of 1917-1918 were primarily proclaimed by the colonial state to protect peasant and communal lands from alienation<sup>12</sup>.

While the government of the Western Region adopted the provisions in 1952, that of the Eastern Region did the same in the 1956 and this made the status of land in the colonial period remain largely unchanged. But despite the modifications, emphasis remained on communal ownership. By 1962, the Land Tenure Law was promulgated in Northern Nigeria<sup>13</sup>. This law was more or less a re-enactment of the ordinance of 1916. All land in Northern Nigeria was declared native or national land and vested in the Governor or the Minister in charge of land matters.

As it was in the colonial period, under the 1962 law, no transaction in land was valid without the consent of the Governor or Minister. This distinguished between the right of occupancy and that of ownership. As the cultivator enjoyed the right of use and occupation, he did not enjoy right of ownership. A sharp line was also drawn between customary right of occupancy and statutory right of occupancy. Customary right of occupancy was the right granted to indigenes or indigenous communities by the Local Government in the rural areas for use and occupation in accordance with native law or custom but not limited in duration<sup>14</sup>. Statutory right of occupancy was the right granted to indigenes or non-indigenes by the Governor (or Minister in charge of land) for specific purposes and for specified duration of time<sup>15</sup>. This law also provided for the revocation of the rights of occupancy. Consequently, customary rights may be revoked by the Minister for purpose of making the land available for retraction of building materials<sup>16</sup>. At the same time, statutory right of occupancy may also be revoked by the Minister if the land was required for mining purpose or public purpose by Local, State or Federal Governments among other reasons<sup>17</sup>.

From the above, it becomes clear that the right to take over land for mining and for public interests was more decisively exercised from the 1960s onwards in Southern Nigeria. It is important to note that crude oil was discovered in Niger Delta in the late 1950s. Therefore, the legal right to land appropriated by the Regional Governments was to enable them to

exercise sovereignty over the petroleum wealth of the petroleum producing areas. But the intervention of the military in politics and governance of the nation and the imposition of its rigid unitarist command system put the final seal on the ownership of the land by the state. Through a number of Decrees, the state acquired the oil fields from the producing areas. An example of these Decrees was the Petroleum Decree (later Act) of 1969. Here, it should be understood that the takeover of the oil-fields by the state (i.e Federal Government) means the centralization of petroleum revenue or its concentration at the centre.

Also important in the development leading to the expropriation of communal land was the shift from agricultural system based on the small holder to a large scale plantation system. During the 1950s-1960s, the Regional Governments embarked on the establishment of plantations. It was believed that the plantation system of agriculture was more scientific and would ensure better output in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In addition to the above, Regional Government considered plantation agriculture as a means of generating employment opportunities for school leavers. Also within this period, apart from establishing plantation agriculture, governments established farm settlements and cooperative farms as means of generating employment in rural communities and inducing development in the communities through linkage and multiplier effects. During this period, government of each region acquired various acres of land within their powers. This was made easy as existing ordinances on land had provided for government acquisition of land for public purpose. But it should be understood that while it was relatively easy for government to acquire land, it was not easy for private individuals.

The Federal Government embarked on several agricultural programmes in the 1970s. Some of these agricultural programmes were the National Accelerated Food Production Plan (NAFPP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), River Basin

Development Authorities (RBDAs) and Green Revolution (GR). Embarking on these programmes and projects means that government wanted to create a class of large scale capitalist planters or progressive farmers who required easy accessibility and availability of land to both government and private individuals. Before the establishment of the above agricultural programmes and projects, there had been a growing support for a change in land policy as it was held that communal ownership of land system made it impossible for Nigerians in land starved areas to acquire land in better endowed areas<sup>18</sup>. It was also considered that the absence of private title made it difficult for land to be used as security for credit facilities from banks<sup>19</sup>. With the establishment of these agricultural programmes and projects and growing petty bourgeois class, there was the need for land reform leading to the promulgation of the Land Use Decree (later Act) in 1978.

Moreover, even where land was rapidly available, the prices were often prohibitive and compensation claimed and paid by Governments was generally much higher than the true opportunity cost of land<sup>21</sup>. This condition was aggravated by the activities of land speculators who purchased land which they did not intend to develop immediately but held them until development increased their market value and were sold at abnormal profits<sup>22</sup>. To overcome the above difficulties, Federal Government set up the Anti-inflation Task Force on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1975. The main term of reference of the Task Force among others, was to examine the existing inflationary tendencies in the economy and identify the causes.

In its first report, the Task Force recommended in the section under land, among others, a comprehensive national policy on land by the promulgation of a Decree that will vest all land in principle in the State Government<sup>23</sup>. This report was not accepted by the Federal Government but the persistence of the difficulties on the acquisition of land for development noted above and the incidence of high rents demanded by

property developers and incidence occasioned by not only high cost of building materials but also land, led to the settling up of Rent Panel on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1977. While the panel dealt exclusively with incidence of soaring house rents, it also recommended the need for the establishment of land reform commission which was to be charged with four main functions which were:

- a. to study very closely the various aspects of land tenure systems and to recommend to the Federal Government steps to be taken to streamline them.
- b. to take stock of the land situation in the country and establish an order of priorities.
- c. to control future uses of land and open new lands for the needs of Nigerian growing population especially in the urban centres and
- d. to promulgate a decree which should vest in the State Governments within two years all undeveloped sites in private layouts within defined urban centres<sup>24</sup>.

In the same year, some members of the Constitution Drafting Committee who were to draft and recommend a constitution for Nigeria also recommended the nationalization of all undeveloped lands in Nigeria. According to them, it is revolting to one's sense of justice and equity that one person should own ten or more plots of state's lands when others have none. Based on this, it became clear that Federal Government should take urgent actions to address the anomalies in the existing Land Tenure System in Nigeria as described by several panels mentioned above. Consequently, on 6th May, 1977, the Federal Military Government led by General Olusegun Obasanjo decided to set up a Land Use Panel. The panel was inaugurated on 26th May, 1977 with the following terms of reference:

- i. to undertake an indepth study of the various land tenure, land use and conservation practices in the country and recommend steps to be taken to streamline them.
- ii. to analyze and study the implications of a uniform land policy for the country and as well examine the feasibility of a uniform land policy for the entire country and make necessary recommendations and propose guidelines for their implementation.
- iii. to examine necessary steps for controlling future land use and also opening and developing new lands for the needs of the government and Nigerian ever increasing population in both urban and rural areas and make appropriate recommendations<sup>25</sup>.

The Land Use Panel submitted two reports, majority and minority to the Federal Government in early 1978. The majority report of the panel advised in a clear term against either the nationalization of land or the extension of the land tenure system of the Northern states to the whole country. The minority report advocated its nationalization, stating that the idea of government being the custodian of land as in the Northern states is germane and should remain acceptable base for land use. Based on this, the Federal Military Government concurred with the supporters of the Minority Report and accordingly promulgated a decree on Land use which was called Land Use Decree of No. 6 of 1978.

### **Basic Objectives of the Land Use Act**

The Land Use Act was promulgated based on the following four objectives.

- a) To remove the bitter controversies, resulting at times in loss of lives and limbs which land is known to be generating.
- b) To streamline and simplify the management and ownership of land in the country.

- c) To assist the citizens, irrespective of their social status to realize their ambition and aspiration of owning a place where they can live with their families and secure a peaceful life.
- d) To enable the government to bring under control the uses of land in all parts of the country and facilitate planning and zoning programmes for particular uses<sup>26</sup>.

### **Basic Purposes of the Land Use Act of 1978**

- a) The Land Use Act was designed to stimulate investment in agriculture by enhancing land security
- b) It was to curb speculation in urban land
- c) To provide opportunities for Nigerians to occupy land generally available which will bring about increased mobility of human and material resources and remove a major source of socio-economic inequality
- d) It was intended to nationalize user rights all over the country and remove constraints of customary land tenure systems in order to optimize, and sustain land use, ensure sustained improvements to land quality and to enlighten the people on the rights to use land<sup>27</sup>.

At the same time, the decree adopted three basic strategies to resolve land tenure problems in Nigeria. These strategies include vesting in the state all proprietary rights in land, granting user rights to individuals and relying on an administrative system rather than a market system in the allocation of user rights<sup>28</sup>.

Other major components of the decree include the statutory right of occupancy allocated by the Governor on the advice of the Land Use and Allocation Committee in urban areas and the Local Government Area Chairman in rural areas. Urban Land Use allocations are limited to 6.5 hectares each and rural allocations are limited to 500 hectares for arable land and 5,000 hectares for grazing land.

## **Some Basic Specifications of the Land Use Act of 1978**

The Land Use Act provides that all lands in each state (except land vested in Federal Government and its agencies) shall be held in trust and administered by the Military Governor of the state for use and benefit of all Nigerians. Some specifications of the Act are stated below.

- a) According to the Act, in urban areas, all lands shall be controlled and managed by the Military Governor while Local Governments control and manage all lands in their areas of jurisdiction which are not designated urban areas as stated in Part 1 sub-section 2, paragraphs "a" and "b"<sup>29</sup>.
- b) A Land Use and Allocation Committee will be established in each state and this committee will advise the Military Governor on Land matter in urban areas.
- c) According to the Act, the committee is to advise the Military Governor on the issue of resettlement of people who lose their rights of occupancy as a result of land required for public purposes for the amount of compensation due to them.
- d) Members of this committee will be appointed by the Military Governor but must include not less than two persons who are qualified to serve in the Public Service either as estate surveyors or land officers. These men must have been qualified for a period of five years. At the same time, a legal practitioner is also to be a member while the Governor will also appoint a member of the committee to serve as the chairman.
- e) In the non-urban areas, Land Allocation Advisory Committee will be established in each Local Government and membership of this committee is subject to the approval of the Military Governor after due consultation with the Local Government. The function of this committee is to advise the Local Government on the management of land in the areas of jurisdiction of the Local Government.



From the aforementioned points, it is clear that the Military Governor is empowered by the Land Use Act to mark out the area of the territory of the State which is designated as urban and this is subject to general conditions which are stipulated by the National Council of State<sup>30</sup>.

Well, the importance of this decree is that it embodies the procedures for the transition from customary to state sanctioned land tenure and it is designed to deal with a whole range of Land Use problem. At the same time, the rural farmers or rural dwellers still have a higher degree of commitment to the rules, regulations and principles of the customary land tenure system which they understand and through which they always gain access to income. This means that many of the rural farmers are completely unaware of the Decree and its provisions.

The problem associated with the Land Use Act is lack of adequate compensation to those who lose their lands when the Act is applied. Another problem noticed is the inability of small holders to increase the size of their holdings because they lack the economic and political power needed to increase their land holdings. At the same time, the southerners consider the Land Use Act as an overt political extension of the Land Tenure Law of 1962 and the State Land Law of 1915 which applied to the North and to the South. Furthermore, the Land Use Act also has another problem which grants the Military Governor of each state absolute power even to the detriment of landlords. Moreover, the Land Use Act transfers all lands in the state to the state, its operators and its agents. By this, the Land Use Act also gives legal support to existing expropriations and at the same time allows for extensive encroachment on communal land. By doing this, it allows the state to hide behind the Act which vests the land within each state in the government to acquire large areas of communal land. This has been demonstrated in Ogoni land within the period under review particularly in 2012 when the former Governor of Rivers State, Honourable Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi forcefully hid behind this Act to acquire 2,000 hectares of land in Tai and Khana Local Government Areas

for Banana Plantation. This caused about 7 months cascading blood-bath which claimed many lives.

Also important to be noted about the Act is that it empowers the Federal Government to take over the crude oil fields from the State governments and peoples of the oil producing areas. Nevertheless, the Land Use Act is also a source of conflict between the Federal Government and State Government. While the land within the jurisdiction of a State Government is vested in the Governor, the Federal Government may also require title to land in any area of the federation for public purposes. Here, Federal Government's interests concerning free acquisition of land for public purposes are safe guarded by sections 49 and 50 of the Act.

### **Ideological and Philosophical Bases of the Act**

The ideological and philosophical bases of the Act are stated below as in the preamble of the Act.

According to the Act, it is in the public interest that the rights of all Nigerians relating to land of Nigeria be asserted and preserved by law. The Act also states that it is in the public interest that the rights of all Nigerians to use and enjoy land in Nigeria and the natural resources thereof in sufficient quantity in order to make them provide for sustenance of themselves and their families be asserted, protected and preserved.

From the above, it is clear that every Nigerian has right to a piece of land in Nigeria for use and enjoyment and the right stated above should not be denied any Nigerian by any authority. By this assertion, the Act aims at protecting and preserving these rights by vesting all lands in the territory of a state in the state. To achieve this, the Act provides a tripartite system of land holding which involves the Federal Government, State Government and private sector<sup>31</sup>.

## **The Act and The Constitution**

To prove to Nigerians that Land Policy and administration are very important to Nigerians for the achievement of development, this Land Use Act was incorporated into the 1999 constitution (section 274 (5) (d) of the 1999 constitution) with a view that its provisions should not be annulled. But it should be understood that its incorporation into the 1999 Nigerian constitution has led to confusion as regards the actual status of the Act. This has led to many inconsistencies between the provision of the Act and the constitution.

First, section 1 of the Act vests all land in the state, leaving the individual with right of occupancy devoid of ownership. This checks the property right of individual radically as regards his ownership of land under section 43 of the 1999 constitution which guarantees the individual right to acquire and own immovable property (i.e land) anywhere in Nigeria.

Second, section 47(1) of the Act makes the Act to have effect on any law or rule of law including the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This sub-section also objects to the jurisdiction of the court enquiring into any issue concerning vesting all land in the Governor, right to grant statutory and customary rights of occupancy by Governor and Local Government respectively and in section 2, any question as to the amount or adequacy of any compensation paid or payable under the Act. This is inconsistent with the supremacy of the constitution as enshrined in section 1 (1) and 3 of the 1999 constitution.

Consequently, the objection clauses in sections 47(1) and 2 above are inconsistent with section 272 of the 1999 constitution which guarantees the jurisdiction of the Higher Court of a state to hear and determine any civil and criminal proceeding involving the existence of extent of legal right, power, duty, liability, privilege, obligation or any

claim in any issue, penalty, forfeiture, punishment or other liability in respect of an offence committed by any person.

Third, the finality of Land Use Act and Allocation Committee's decision on disputes referred to it as regards the amount of compensation payable under section 29 in respect of land compulsorily acquired in the public interest without appeal to court is ultra-vires to section 44(1) of the 1999 constitution which gives any person claiming compensation payable in the event of compulsory acquisition of his property right of access to court to determine his interest.

Finally, section 47 above only affirms military antecedent to the Act. The section can only be applied under a dispensation where the provisions of the constitution are clearly suspended and have effect of the pleasure of the Military Government. In the present democratic dispensation, the constitution is supreme and if any other law is inconsistent with its provisions, the constitution shall prevail and that other law shall to the extent of its inconsistency be void.

### **Application of the Act in Ogoni**

This is concerned with acquisition of land in Ogoni by the State and Federal Governments through the Land Use Act of 1978. Most of the land acquisitions were done without consulting the people. In some cases, the people were consulted and promised so much by way of payment of adequate compensations which were never fulfilled at last. In other cases, where crop compensation was paid, it was grossly inadequate. In other cases, the communities of the land owners were turned into theatres of war and violence which led to some months of bloodbath. In some communities, land acquired has not been fully utilized by the state. In this process of acquisition of land using the Land Use Act of 1978, the state never recognized the people's customary rights of land ownership. At this point, some cases of state acquisition of land in Ogoni community using the Land Use Act are stated below.

First to be considered here was the acquisition of 89 hectares of land for irrigation project by Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (a Federal Parastatal) in Kpong Community in Khana Local Government Area in 1981. According to Akpo Lenu<sup>32</sup>, the Federal Parastatal promised to electrify the community, construct road for the community and employ many indigenes of the community. At the end, the parastatal failed to electrify the community and construct road for the community but only employed 11 (eleven) junior staff at the level of messengers, cleaners, labourers and security men from the community. No compensation was paid to indigenes of the community. This impacted negatively on the people's agriculture. That the eleven persons employed were at junior staff level, it became difficult to move the community forward economically. The 89 hectares of land acquired without adequate compensation reduced the people's food production. This kept the people in perpetual food scarcity within the period under review. This agricultural project was in connection with the Green Revolution Programme launched by former President Shehu Shagari's administration in 1980. Its objectives were self reliance in food production and diversification of Nigeria's foreign exchange<sup>33</sup>.

Also important to be considered within this period was the acquisition of 215 hectares of land from Agbeta people in Onne community by Rivers State Government for Federal Government for the establishment of National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria in 1982. These 215 hectares of land were occupied by National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria 1 and 2. The acres of land were not bought by Rivers State Government but it only compensated those who had crops planted on the land with a meager sum of money which was less than the financial value of the crops destroyed. During its period of operation, the host community produced only one manager who was Manager of Environment and every other person employed from the host community was at the level of junior staff with very meager salaries.

As National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria got liquidated and was later sold to Notoric Chemical Industry Limited, the host community was not consulted. This was injustice because Rivers State Government did not buy the land from the host community and the new company being Notoric Chemical Industry Limited has also refused to negotiate anything with the host community. This neglect made Chief F.E. Amasi – tito on behalf of the host community sue Federal Government, Rivers State Government, Director of General Bureau for Public Enterprises and Notoric Chemical Industry Nigeria Limited to Federal High Court of Justice in Abuja for payment of claims of unlawful encroachment on their land and environmental degradation. According to Chief F.E. Amasi – tito, the presence of Eleme Petrochemical Company Limited now the Indorama group of Company and former National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria (now Notoric Chemical Industry Nigeria Limited), in Eleme made the people suffer unemployment, low food production, hunger, land hunger, poverty and control of the economy by non-indigenes who worked in these companies<sup>34</sup>. Consequently, their resource (land) has become curse to them.

In 1985, Rivers State Government under the leadership of Fidelis Oyakhilome (the former Military Governor of Rivers State) acquired 360 hectares of land from Bunu-Tai and Ban-goi in Tai Local Government Area in Ogoni. The 360 hectares of land were first used by School to Land Authority. State Government did not buy these 360 hectares of land but acquired them under the false promises of giving the host communities electricity, good roads, good drinking water and scholarships to youths. None of these promises was made good by 2012<sup>35</sup>.

Before the coming of former Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi as Governor of Rivers State in 2007, this School to Land Authority was no longer functioning well. This School to Land had power to employ and train youths of Rivers State origin in modern crops, livestock and fish farming. It is also within its power to settle the trained farmers on land

and facilities acquired by Government in Local Government Areas to make them develop careers in crops, livestock farming, fishery or mixed farming with modern techniques. These settled farmers are to be encouraged and supported through the provision of necessary farming input and also in the areas of processing and marketing of their produce.

In 2010, Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi renamed the farm Rivers Songhai Farm for demonstration purpose and training of youths in agriculture<sup>36</sup> and was placed under the management of Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) for effective management. The farm is used for rearing of animals like grass cutters, pigs, birds and fish farming. This farm employed 30 youths from Bunu-Tai and 20 youths from Ban-goi but all of them were casual workers. Nobody from the host communities held administrative positions. Only Ikwerre people held administrative positions and Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency was under the chairmanship of an Opobo man named Noble Pepple.

An oral interview with an indigene<sup>37</sup> of Bunu-Tai reveals that the acquisition of 360 hectares of Land in Bunu-Tai and Ban-goi in Tai Local Government Area registered negatively on the lives of the people.

According to the informant interviewed, State government acquired these 360 hectares of land with very meager compensation for crops planted on the land and economically, he was rendered jobless as all his farmlands are in the 360 hectares of land acquired by State Government. He added that his family suffered severe hunger as a result of state acquisition of these 360 hectares of land. It becomes clear here that, instead of the land to become blessing to the people, it turned to be curse.

In addition to the above, a staff or labourer of Rivers Songhai Farm interviewed reveals that each labourer was paid as low as twenty-seven thousand naira (₦27,000.00) only as salary<sup>38</sup>. According to him, with the

oil induced inflation, the twenty-seven thousand naira (₦27,000.00) paid as salary was very insufficient as it could not take care of them for two weeks. Government gained more than the host communities as it collected profits from the farm but never made good any of the promises made to the host communities and this made host communities suffer hunger within the period under review. As they never held administrative positions, they turned to be slaves on their own land.

The host communities also experienced rural-urban drift. As the land of the host communities had been acquired by State Government without giving the host communities financial compensation that would have made them economically independent and the few youths employed were only labourers who were paid as low as twenty-seven thousand naira (₦27,000.00) only, the youths of the host communities travelled to urban areas for meaningful economic activities because their home economy could no longer engage them meaningfully. This negatively impacted on food production. Consequently, the poor income they earned led to poor saving and poor investment which made them operate on vicious circle of poverty. To escape this vicious circle of poverty, they migrated to urban areas for better economic activities.

Still in Ogoni, in 1985, Rivers State Government acquired 35 hectares of land from indigenes of Kpaa Community in Khana Local Government Area<sup>39</sup>. State Government did not buy these 35 hectares of land from the host community. They were used for agricultural project under the School to Land programme. Acquiring these 35 hectares of land from this community means taking the only source of livelihood from the people as this community is completely an agrarian community.

The land was used for planting of tree crops like oil palm tree, Ogbonor tree and other food crops like cassava, maize, pumpkin leaf and okra. As the land owners were not paid demonstrates that the Land Use Act within the period under review was environmentally unfriendly as it



took away ownership rights from the affected community. This made it difficult for the affected community to take appropriate steps in protecting and controlling their natural environment which is the foundation of their lives especially when the lives of the people depend on the environment<sup>40</sup>. This Act alienated land from this community as it dispossessed them of their entitlements as regards benefits derived from ownership of land. As explained under conceptual clarifications, the people's land has turned to be a curse instead of blessing as it put the people into land hunger and unemployment.

Furthermore, still in 1985, State Government also acquired 170 hectares of land from Nonwa Community for fish pond in Tai Local Government Area. As it happened in other cases discussed above, these 170 hectares of land were not bought by State Government but State Government only paid crop compensation to farmers who planted crops on their land. Government had 100 ponds here.

The fish pond was later abandoned within the period under review and the land owners were denied access to their land even when the 170 hectares of land were no longer used for the purpose acquired for. The people suffered hunger, poverty and unemployment as State Government acquired these 170 hectares of land without giving the people alternative means of livelihood.

Nevertheless, in 1986, Rivers State Government acquired about 350 hectares of land from Zaakpong, Kpong, Kor and Wiiyaakara Communities in Khana Local Government Area for Agricultural Development Programme. This Rivers State Agricultural Development Programme had as its objectives extended programme for food security, root and tuber expansion programme and Rivers State extension service programme<sup>41</sup>. Here, indigenes of the host communities were also rendered economically unemployed as their only source of livelihood being land was taken away from them without any commensurate replacement.

This acquisition of land from these communities negatively affected the host communities as the agricultural farm produced agricultural products and sold them to the public. The problem the host communities encountered here was that they lacked the purchasing power to purchase the agricultural products of the farm because their land which would have generated money for them had been taken away from them by government. Consequently, the products of the farm were mostly purchased by Port Harcourt based non-indigenes<sup>42</sup>. This reduced foodstuffs available to the people. The farm planted cassava, pumpkin leaf and maize and reared animals like goat, rabbit and birds.

Again, in 1988, Rivers State Government acquired 1,895 hectares of land<sup>43</sup> from Aleto, Akpajo, Agbor-Nchia and Njuru for the Federal Military Government for the establishment of Eleme Petrochemical Company Limited<sup>44</sup>. The Eleme Petrochemical Company Limited was established as 100% subsidiary of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation but the plant was subsequently built in 1995. 17 years after the acquisition of the 1,895 hectares of land that is, in 2005, the Indorama Group became the core investor in the company as they bought the assets of the company due to the privatization policy of Federal Government under the Olusegun Obasanjo's administration. Federal Government acquired these 1,895 hectares of land from Aleto, Akpajo, Agbor-Nchia, and Njuru communities in Eleme Local Government Area during the military administration of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. The 1,895 hectares were not bought but Federal Government only gave meager financial crop compensation to those who planted crops on the land. As the Indorama Group of Company bought the company, they never consulted the host community. This explains the concept of exclusion.

During the acquisition of these hectares of land, Federal Government made promises like provision of electricity, good roads, awards of scholarship to youths of the host communities and giving of employment opportunities to youths of the host communities but these

promises were not completely made good during the time under review<sup>45</sup>. According to the same informant, the company employed few casual staffs from the host communities with only one person from the host community who served as a Resource manager. By this, the host communities were not well represented at the management level of the company. This also helps to explain why many of the youths from the host communities were not employed as there was nobody at the management level to speak on their behalf.

At the same time, it is also stated that the acquisition of the 1,895 hectares of land also made the host communities suffer hunger during the period under review<sup>46</sup>. Within the period, all that the company did was giving of christmas gifts like life cow, a bag of rice and drinks to chiefs of the host communities. These items did nothing to improve the economic fortune of the people but only put them on the path of excessive consumption. It can be argued that youths were employed but the employment opportunities given to them did not transform the lives of the youths positively because they were at the level of casual workers which never attracted more money. Consequently, the only man who served as the resource manager named Nyime Oluka Obuzor could not transform the communities positively as he was alone. As the land of these communities was acquired without compensation, the people suffered economic disempowerment and were subsequently placed on vicious circle of poverty.

To increase agricultural productivity of Rivers State, Rivers State Government in 1992 acquired 13 hectares of land from Okwale community for Rison Palm Oil Palm Plantation in Khana Local Government Area. Here, State only paid crop compensation but never bought the land from the host community<sup>47</sup>. Oil palm trees were planted on the land but were always harvested with the labour of the host community. The palm fruits were not processed but were sold in bunches. This reduced the number of workers the company employed.

In 2012, the few workers employed were sacked. The disengaged workers sued the farm to industrial court in Bayelsa for their gratuity and pension. Before disengagement, these workers were paid as low as twenty thousand naira (₦20,000.00) only as monthly salary. This twenty thousand naira paid as salary was very meager compared to what they earned from their farm before their land was acquired. Here, State Government promised the host community good drinking water, electricity and good roads but after the land had been acquired, none of these promises was made good.

In the management of the farm, the host community was also marginalized as Ikwerre people were appointed sole administrator and plantation manager. Indigenes of the host community were only palm fruit cutters. This was unjust as there were many people in the host community who were qualified to be appointed as sole administrator and plantation managers but they were not appointed.

Furthermore, in 2006, Federal Government of Nigeria through a Federal parastatal named Niger Delta Basin Development Authority in Rivers State acquired 500 hectares of swamp from Bodo for large scale fish farm. The parastatal never bought these hectares of land from the host community but only compensated the people for economic trees on the land. In the area of employment, the federal parastatal employed only one person from the community out of the 500 hectares of swampy land acquired. This one man employed was a security man and also retired at the level of security man. Due to oil spillage in the community, the project was abandoned and the host community is denied access to the land. With this, the people lost ownership right over their land.

As if the above were not enough, in 2011, Rivers State Government also acquired 258, 954 hectares of land from Beerli and Nyokuru communities in Khana Local Government Area for New Town<sup>48</sup>. Rivers State Government did not buy these vast hectares of land and for

agrarian communities to lose 258, 954 hectares of land without any commensurate replacement means economic death. From 2011 to 2012, Rivers State Government did nothing on the said hectares of land but the landlords were denied access to the land. This ended in throwing the people into economic hardship.

Finally, in 2012, Rivers State Government under the leadership of former Governor of Rivers State, Honourable Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi acquired 2,000 hectares of land from Zor-Sogho and Luusue-Sogho in Khana Local Government Area, Ue-Ken and Kpite in Tai Local Government Area for Banana plantation farm. Rivers State Government did not buy these 2,000 hectares of land from the host communities but only compensated Luusue-Sogho, Ue-Ke and Kpite for crops planted on the land and left out Zor-Sogho because Zor-Sogho resisted this forceful acquisition of land with their blood. Despite protest made by peasant farmers (men and women) against government acquisition of their land, Rivers State Government still acquired the people's land. A picture of protesters is shown on the next page.

**PICTURES SHOWING OGO NI PEOPLE PROTESTING GOVERNMENT SEIZURE OF THEIR LAND**



Ogoni women protesting government seizure of their farmlands  
**Source:** Social Action (2013:6)



Ogoni Representatives complaining government seizure of their farmlands to Officials of the Rivers State House of Assembly  
**Source:** Social Action (2013:7)

Rivers State Government under the leadership of former Governor, Honourable Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi seeing that the resistance of people was very high, decided to use divide and rule tactic<sup>49</sup> and psychological oppression<sup>50</sup>. He used divide and rule tactic as he was able to penetrate the communities affected through the efforts of the loyalists of People's Democratic Party and few members of HRH W.Z.P. Nziidee's family who supported governments decision against the popular decision of the affected Ogoni communities. He used psychological oppression as he offered huge amount of money to the few party loyalists to go against their people's decision. Photocopies of letters from the people to government are shown under appendix.

To weaken Zor-Sogho which mounted very strong resistance against government acquisition of their land, government deployed armed policemen who were ordered to shoot on sight at Zor-Sogho community. At the end of police operation on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2011 in the community, John Eenee Dambani and Goteh Keenam were shot dead. Pictures of these victims are shown on the next page. On the same day, one Nkpae Job Legbara (Senior Administrative Officer), a staff of Niger Delta Basin Development Authority was burnt alive by angry youths and thrown into a pit for false accusation of reporting the restiveness of community boys to Bori Divisional Police Officer.

**PICTURES OF SOGHO BOYS SHOT DEAD DURING POLICE OPERATION IN THE COMMUNITY**



Picture of John Eenee Dambani, aged 25, shot dead by police on 12 June, 2011 **Source:** Social Action (2013:4)



Picture of Goteh Keenam, aged 18, shot dead by the Nigerian police on 12th June, 2011, **Source:** Social Action (2013:4)



Against the above backdrop of social tension, Zor-Sogho accused Luusue-Sogho of leading Government Survey Team to survey their land for the Banana Plantation project because some members of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had been used by government to convince some indigenes of Luusue to give their land to government for banana project through psychological oppression. This led to seven months of cascading blood-bath between Luusue-Sogho and Zor-Sogho. This crisis led to several life casualties and destruction of property worth millions of naira in Luusue-Sogho and Zor-Sogho beginning from the 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2012 to December 2012. This violent crisis crippled the economic fortune of the indigenes of both Zor-Sogho and Luusue-Sogho.

### **An Examination of the Impact of Land Use Act of 1978 on Ogoni Economy**

Here, an examination of the impact of the Land Use Act of 1978 is carried out to bring out the economic changes registered on Ogoni economy by this Act from 1978-2012. These economic changes are discussed below.

Very important to be considered here is resource alienation. Alienation means the separation of a people from their means of livelihood and from their natural milieu<sup>51</sup>. This is important to this study as societies are linked to their natural environment in which they are embedded<sup>52</sup>. With the number of hectares of land acquired by State and Federal Governments in the area in the name of development projects, substantial available farmland in the area had been taken away during the period under review. Due to this acquisition of land by State and Federal Governments, the Ogoni people were denied access to these hectares of land and this reduced the available cultivable land. This negatively impacted on food production. Through this way, the people were alienated from their land.

Also important to be considered here as an impact of Land Use Act on Ogoni people within the period under review is the loss of able-bodied men and women due to migration and conflicts resulting from land appropriation by State and Federal Governments. Due to scarcity of farmland for agricultural activities resulting from land appropriation through Land Use Act by State and Federal Governments, able-bodied men and women migrated to other areas like Port Harcourt, Lagos and other interior communities outside Ogoni land for white-collar jobs and other meaningful economic activities. As migration was selective, generally, their loss to other areas did not only result in net transfer of value but also led to shortage of farm labour which reduced food crop production in traditional agricultural setting. Consequently, within the period under review, the Ogoni area moved from a food surplus area to a food deficit area. At the same time, due to scarcity of farmland for agriculture resulting from land acquisition by State and Federal Governments through the Land Use Act, several communities encroached on one another's land which led to violent conflicts which claimed the lives of many able-bodied men and women. An example here was the Luusue-Sogho and Zor-Sogho violent clash in 2012 which led to the death of several young men and women. Names of the victims are stated in the table on the next page.

**Table 5.1: Names of persons who died in the Zor-Sogho versus Luusue-Sogho communal clash arising from Rivers State Government’s acquisition of 2,000 hectares of land from Kpite, Ue-Ken, Zor-Sogho and Luusue-Sogho in Ogoni.**

<b>Names of Victims</b>	<b>Community of Origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>
Nsereka Nsaanee Nelson	Zor-Sogho	75	Male
Lebe Raphael	Zor-Sogho	71	Male
Nwaakun Nmea	Zor-Sogho	55	Female
Nwadam Nwaateyor	Zor-Sogho	25	Male
Nwakama Gbarabe	Zor-Sogho	20	Male
Nkpaamue Yerema	Zor-Sogho	20	Male
Alete Maanyie	Zor-Sogho	25	Male
Adamkue Tornyie	Zor-Sogho	15	Male
Eenee John DamBari	Zor-Sogho	25	Male
Keenam Goteh	Zor-Sogho	18	Male
AlubaBari Ndinee	Zor-Sogho	25	Male
Nnaa Akpanaka	Akporo-Sogho	25	Male
Lebara Solomon	Luusue-Sogho	57	Male

**Sources:** Beeteh Fynface N., oral interview on the 14th October, 2016, aged 32, active participant in the Zor-Sogho versus Luusue-Sogho 2012 crisis, a farmer, from Zor-Sogho in Khana Local Government Area in Rivers State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.<sup>53</sup>

It should be noted that many of those who died during this period were in the active sector of the community’s population, and these were people that would have become active economic players in the economy of the community. As they died, the economy suffered economic stagnation. The death of these persons registered negatively on the economic life of the people.

Nevertheless, farmland scarcity engendered by land appropriation through Land Use Act caused a weakening of the traditional land sharing institution and instituted the trend towards individual land ownership. In communities where communal land ownership was practised, land

appropriation by State and Federal Governments through Land Use Act diminished communal land ownership and individual land ownership took the position of communal ownership as it reduced available cultivable land.

Furthermore, during the period under review, the people lost control of their land through the Land Use Act. This was well pronounced in the acquisition of 2,000 hectares of Land for Banana Project in Ogoni. Even when the people resisted state acquisition of these 2,000 hectares of land, State Government deployed armed policemen to Zor-Sogho village (where the resistance was very strong) to shoot boys protesting in order to weaken Zor-Sogho. This action led to the death of one Nkpae Job Legbara (Senior Administrative Staff of Niger Delta Basin Development Authority), Eenee John Dambani and Keenam Goteh on the 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2012. After the people had been weakened, through police action, State Government was able to acquire the 2000 hectares of land needed for the Banana Agricultural Project. This demonstrates that the people did not have control over their land.

The people suffered land hunger, hunger, unemployment and poverty. As both State and Federal Governments acquired several hectares of land from the Ogoni people through the Land Use Act, the people suffered land hunger. This land hunger led to crises which claimed several lives. As several hectares of the people's land were acquired, the people lacked farm land for food production. This led to hunger. As government took away their only source of livelihood being land, the people became unemployed which further led to poverty. This evil led to migration to other places in search of meaningful economic activities.

Moreover, the application of Land Use Act in Ogoni also reduced drastically the Ogoni fallow period. In Ogoni, it reduced the fallow period from seven years to three years. Ogoni people used to have seven communal farmlands and each was apportioned out to villages and

families for farming on rotational basis<sup>54</sup>. Reduction in fallow period occurred due to State and Federal Governments acquisition of land in the area. This drastic reduction in the fallow period reduced soil fertility and negatively affected the natural system of growth.

Important to be mentioned here is that the Land Use Act also caused environmental degradation. Environmental degradation refers to the spoilage or depletion of environmental resources such that they are neither available nor even when available, they are not in the right quantity or quality and the introduction of hazardous substances which have the capacity to impair the quality of the environment<sup>55</sup>. An example here is the former National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria at Onne in Eleme which degraded the environment of Onne people. This is because there was significant increase of the background radiation count rate in a Potassium-bearing fertilizer<sup>56</sup> and effluents from the production process into Onne creeks destroyed aquatic lives and negatively affected fishing activity in the area. This is because the Land Use Act was used to acquire the land where the company was situated. Even Eleme Petrochemical Company at Eleme emitted dangerous gas from the production process into the air and this gas emitted is toxic to human health.

In addition to the above, the Land Use Act promoted further efflorescence and rapid enthronement of the state and private capitalism in the area. The Act enabled governments to acquire land anywhere in the area. From the above analysis, it is clear that the operators of the state hid behind the Act which vests proprietary right of the land in each state in the state to acquire large hectares of communal land. Consequently, the Act provided for state's takeover of any area in terms of location and size for public purposes even when they are not for the benefits of the land owners. It encouraged the enthronement of private capitalism at the expense of the host communities as the privatization policy of former President Olusegun Obasanjo made the Indorama Group and the Notoric Chemical Industries Nigeria Limited become core investors in the Eleme

Petrochemical Company and National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria respectively. Indigenes of Ogoni could not get the capital needed for these investments and non-indigenes (capitalists) were able to buy these two companies cited on their land. Here, it should be understood that but for the Land Use Act, this would not have happened. From the above argument, capitalists and state were enthroned in Ogoni land at the expense of the Ogoni indigenes.

Another example of the enthronement of private capitalism and the state in Ogoni is the Banana Plantation Project. Rivers State Government acquired 2,000 hectares of land from Zor-Sogho, Luusue-Sogho in Khana Local Government Area and Ue-Ken and Kpite in Tai Local Government Area and gave it out to a Mexican Company named "Union De Initiative De C.U." for Banana Plantation Project in which Rivers State Government owns 40% while the Mexican Company owns 60% of the farm<sup>57</sup>. This is a form of enthronement of private capitalism because the company owns 60% while Rivers State Government owns 40% of the farm. This demonstrates that the company hid behind State Government during the acquisition of the 2,000 hectares of land for Banana Plantation Project.

Another impact of the Land Use Act on Ogoni economy is that the Act empowered Federal Government of Nigeria to take over crude oil fields from the Ogoni oil producing people. Crude oil was discovered in Bomu in Gokana Local Government Area in 1958, Korokoro in 1962 and Ebubu in 1963. These Bomu, Korokoro and Ebubu are in Ogoni area. Other villages in Ogoni with oil wells are Nyobe, Bodo and Yola. All these oil wells produce thousands of barrels of crude oil. These barrels of crude oil produced during this period under review were not either controlled or managed by the Ogoni villages that produced them. They were in the hands of Federal Government of Nigeria and were used to develop other areas at the expense of Ogoni people. Federal Government's control of the crude oil produced by Ogoni people was facilitated by the Land Use Act. Failure of litigations and legislative means made the Ogoni people to

adopt extra-legal means of agitation. This led to the emergence of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and militants groups in Ogoni area. The argument here is that if the crude oil produced by the Ogoni people had been controlled by the people, the economic fortunes of the people would have improved.

Finally, the Land Use Act also led to several communal conflicts which claimed several lives and destroyed property worth millions of naira. This came up due to land hunger caused by land appropriation by State and Federal Governments through the Land Use Act. This land scarcity increased pressure on land which further made some communities to encroach on the land of other communities. This situation led to violent clash characterized by months of cascading bloodbath. An example here was the Kpong versus Luusue-Sogho crisis of 2011. Due to the acquisition of 89 hectares of land from Kpong Community in 1981 for irrigation farm by Niger Delta Basin Development Authority, Kpong was thrown into land hunger and this made this community encroach on Luusue-Sogho's land. This led to violent clash between Luusue-Sogho and Kpong Community in 2011. This violent crisis claimed many lives and property worth millions of naira.

Another example here was the Zor-Sogho versus Luusue-Sogho's crisis of 2012. During the acquisition of 2,000 hectares of land from Zor-Sogho, Luusue-Sogho, Kpite and Ue-Ken communities in Ogoni by Rivers State Government under Honourable Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, Luusue-Sogho surveyed part of Zor-Sogho's land to be their own. This encroachment on Zor-Sogho's land by Luusue-Sogho community led to a violent and bloody clash between Luusue-Sogho and Zor-Sogho. At the end of the bloody clash, the persons mentioned in table 5.1 on page 216 died.<sup>58</sup> This was confirmed by Anyalewechi, B.<sup>59</sup> and Anuche, C.<sup>60</sup> as they admitted that some people were killed in the crisis. Nkuesi, G.<sup>61</sup> confirms this when he states that more than ten persons were killed in Zor-Sogho

and Akporo-Sogho by Luusue-Sogho which was sponsored by Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi to kill their brothers and sisters.

Due to this crisis (Zor-Sogho versus Luusue-Sogho), property worth millions of naira was destroyed. An example here was the six bedrooms flat of the researcher which was converted into a heap of ruins. Sogho Son's Petrol Station owned by one Nnaasua Festus containing 66,000 litres of fuel was burnt to ashes and many other houses including the house of one Reverend Mkpeme Peter were razed down. Many shops especially provision stores were looted and burnt. Valuable economic trees and food crops planted on the farm were destroyed. All these happened in Zor-Sogho because Rivers State Government of the year sponsored Luusue-Sogho against Zor-Sogho as Zor-Sogho was seen to have resisted government acquisition of the 2,000 hectares of land. During the period of this crisis, various lawful economic activities stagnated. Fishing, farming and trading came to a halt and this crisis threw the people into a period of economic hardship characterized by food scarcity, economic retrogression, unemployment and homelessness.

Looking at the other side of the coin, some people can argue that the Land Use Act generated employment opportunities but a proper examination of the employment opportunities it offered the people reveals that they were not the ones that could transform the economic fortunes of the people positively because 98 percent of the people employed were at the level of casual staff or workers who never earned any reasonable salary that could take care of the people's needs.

Secondly, some people can also argue that within the period under review, the Land Use Act increased food production due to the agricultural farms established on the hectares of land acquired. The irony of the case here was that many of the agricultural farms did not function at full capacity due to poor government sponsorship and mismanagement of fund. As they could not function at full capacity, they were not able to



satisfy food demand of the people. Even the few foodstuffs produced by these farms were bought by non-indigenes based in Port Harcourt as the Ogoni people were placed on the path of poverty caused by appropriation of their land by State and Federal Governments.

From the above, it is clear that land tenure system before the Land Use Act of 1978 attracted less crises compared to the Land Use Act which has increased crises in Ogoni in particular and Niger Delta at large. Putting the Land Use Act on a balanced sheet, it is observed that the negative impacts outweigh the positive impacts. Consequently, this study states that it is a vector of negative economic changes in Ogoni during the period under review.

This justifies the application of the power strand of the theory of Political Economy which is about the dynamics of the reciprocal interaction of the pursuit of wealth and power and how the state affects distribution of wealth. From the above, it is clear that the state acquired the people's land to the economic detriment of the people, while the State and private capitalists gained. From the above analysis, it is clear that acquisition of land in Ogoni by State and Federal Governments through the Land Use Act was to the economic detriment of the people. While this happened, the state and private capitalist were at the advantage side. This also explains why the development impossibility theory is applied. This is because acquisition of land in Ogoni through the Land Use Act was not able to develop the people within the period under review. Instead of developing the people, the state and private capitalists gained at the expense of the people.

### **Relationship between oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978**

Here, it should be understood that certain links exist between oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 in Ogoni. These two vectors of economic changes in Ogoni economy within the period under review have certain things in common which are discussed below.

Important to be considered here is that the two vectors promoted efflorescence and rapid entronement of the state and private capitalism in the area. This is because the Land Use Act is an Act that vests all land in the territory of each state (except land vested in the Federal Government or its agencies) solely in the governor of the state, who holds such land in trust for the people and is responsible for allocation of land in urban areas to individuals and organizations resident in the state for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes while similar powers with respect to non-urban areas are conferred on Local Governments<sup>62</sup>. This means that the Act makes the people lose the right to their lands to state as clearly highlighted in sections one and two of this Act. According to section five (5) (1) of the Act, the governor of a state is empowered in respect of land, whether or not in an urban area to;

- a) grant statutory rights of occupancy to any person for all purposes;
- b) demand rental for any such grant to any person
- c) impose a penal rent for a breach of any covenant in a certificate of occupancy requiring the holder to develop or effect improvements on the land
- d) impose a penal rent for a breach of any condition, expressed or implied which precludes the holder of a statutory right of occupancy from alienations the right of occupancy or any part thereof by sale, mortgage, transfer of possession, sub-lease or bequest or otherwise however without the prior consent of the governor<sup>63</sup>.

From the above, it is clear that the Land Use Act empowered the state to acquire land from Ogoni people. This leads to the entronement of the state and it further strengthens the Petroleum Act in alienating the Ogoni oil wealth from them. The Petroleum Act of 1969 also provides for the exploration of petroleum from the territorial waters and the continental shelf of Nigeria and to vest the ownership of and all onshore

and offshore revenue from resources derivable there from in the Federal Government.

From the Petroleum Act of 1969, it becomes clear that the oil producing people are alienated from their oil wealth as section (1) clearly states that the entire ownership and control of all petroleum in, under or upon any land to which this section applies is vested in the state.

Furthermore, section 2 (1) of the Petroleum Act of 1969 states that the Minister of Petroleum is empowered to grant;

- a. oil exploration license to any company to explore petroleum
- b. oil prospecting license to prospect for petroleum and
- c. oil mining lease, to search for, win, work, carry away and dispose of petroleum.

From the above, the Ogoni people being one of the oil producing communities are not given any role. At the same time, they do not even have the right to protect their sacred lands because the authority in the law to recognize or certify an area to be sacred is in the hands of the state. It is also understood from the above, that land owners (Ogoni people here) have lost the right to grant or refuse permit to oil companies, the use of their land and also the rights to participate in the rates of compensation to be paid to them for their damaged resources. This is because the Petroleum Act of 1969 empowers the Minister of Petroleum to grant permit to oil companies to explore and produce oil wherever they find it<sup>64</sup>. From this explanation, private capitalist and the state are enthroned at the expense of the people that own the wealth. Based on the explanation above, oil exploration and Land Use Act permit the state to take absolute control over the wealth of the Ogoni people at the expense of the people.

Another important linkage between oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 is the alienation of the people's wealth from the people. This is

premised on the fact that Land Use Act of 1978 vests all land in the territory of a state (except land vested in Federal Government or its agencies) solely in the governor of a state who holds such land in trust for the people and he allocates the land to individuals and organizations resident in the state for residential, commercial, agricultural and other purposes<sup>65</sup>. By this, the people's land is alienated from the people and given to the state. From what is stated earlier, the Petroleum Minister and not the oil producing people grants license to explore petroleum in petroleum producing area, license for petroleum prospecting and also lease to search for, win, work, carry away and dispose of petroleum. This means that the people have no role to play. Based on this, oil exploration alienates the people from their crude oil resource as done by Land Use Act of 1978.

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

This study investigates or examines the economic changes registered on Ogoni economy by oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 from 1958 to 2012. This study states that oil exploration and Land Use Act – used as vectors of economic change in this study – are vectors of negative economic change in the Ogoni economy as they led to a culture of penury and underdevelopment in the area within the period under review.

The study is divided into six chapters. The work is introduced by stating the background to the study and followed by statement of the problem. It also identifies the purpose of the study which guides the researcher to draw out major concepts and terms that need to be explained in the study. At this point, the researcher also looks at the significance of the study in relation to a re-interpretation of the Ogoni history. It also extends the frontiers of its discourse by discussing the methods and sources of data collection. The multi-disciplinary approach is its primary methodological approach which helps the researcher to draw evidence from related disciplines like economics, geography, agricultural science and environmental science but at the same time, the qualitative and quantitative explanation is also adopted in the analysis to provide a deeper understanding in the discussion of oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 as vectors of negative economic changes in Ogoni economy and the interconnectedness of social phenomena. The scope of the study is also categorized into spatial, time frame and thematic contexts. It also includes the theoretical framework where the analysis of the discussion is situated in the development impossibility theory and the power strand of the theory of political economy. These are used to explain oil exploration and Land Use Act respectively. It undertakes an empirical review of

previous works on Ogoni as they provide the point of departure for the present study.

The geographical location of Ogoni and its impact on the people are also discussed. It also discusses its origin, migration and settlement history. The frontiers of this study is expanded by discussing Ogoni economy in precolonial and colonial periods. In discussing these, different sectors of the economy within the periods are examined. The study states that the main sector of Ogoni economy before 1958 was agriculture and other sectors mentioned were subsidiaries.

It traces the history of oil exploration in Nigeria and relates it to the Ogoni experience. It states that the search for oil deposits started in Nigeria in the first decade of the 20th century probably 1908 by a German Bitumen Company in Okitipupa area, about 200 kilometres east of Lagos. It adds that in 1958, oil was discovered in Bomu in Gokana Local Government Area in Ogoni and in Korokoro in Tai Local Government Area in Ogoni in 1962 before expanding to other Ogoni communities. In 1962, a refinery was built at Alesa in Eleme, completed in 1964 and commissioned in 1965.

It further discusses the impact of oil exploration on the economic live of Ogoni people. As oil exploration negatively impacted on the people in the areas of poor agricultural productivity, hunger, land hunger, employment, environmental pollution and degradation, high mortality rate, oil induced inflation, looting and destruction of shops and increased crises and conflicts, economic stagnation and strangulation, the work states that it was a vector of negative economic change within the period under review.

It also discusses Land Use Act of 1978 as a vector of economic change in Ogoni economy. Here, it discusses traditional Land Tenure System in Ogoni before the Land Use Act of 1978, historical background of the Act, basic objectives and purposes of Land Use Act of 1978, some

specifications of the Land Use Act of 1978, ideological and philosophical bases of the Act, the Land Use Act and the Nigerian Constitution, application of the Act in Ogoni, examination of its impacts on Ogoni people and the links between Land Use Act of 1978 and oil exploration.

## **Conclusion**

Ogoni comprises four Local Government Areas which are Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme. It occupies the mainland fringe of the Eastern Niger Delta and it is endowed with vast land and crude oil which have turned to be curses instead of blessings to the people. These natural endowments have justified the choice of using oil exploration and Land Use Act as vectors of economic change in the area within the period covered by this study.

From the analysis given above, it becomes clear that oil exploration made the Ogoni people victims of marginalization in the area of employment in Shell Petroleum Development Company which is the major multi-national economic player in the oil sector in Ogoni area. It is also uncovered that within the period covered by this study, Ogoni people suffered reduced agricultural productivity, environmental pollution and degradation, land scarcity and food scarcity, poverty, oil induced inflation, increased crises which claimed lives, disabled many people and crippled others economically. It also destroyed the good moral foundation of the people and threw them into social vices.

Based on the researcher's findings on the impact of Land Use Act on Ogoni people, it is documented that Ogoni people suffered land scarcity, hunger, low agricultural productivity, environmental degradation, unemployment, loss of control of their resources and crises which caused poverty and death.

At the same time, some people can argue that some Ogoni indigenes were employed by Shell Petroleum Development Company,

National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria Limited, Eleme Petro-Chemical Company, State and Federal Governments agricultural farms established on the farmland acquired. But the irony here was that very limited number of the people was employed as shown in the case of ethnic distribution of staff of Shell Petroleum Development Company in 1997. This limited number employed was at the level of junior staff and casual staff. Based on this, they were denied the necessary economic essentials needed for the positive economic transformation of the Ogoni people. This kept them on the path of underdevelopment. This justifies the use of development impossibility theory and the power strand of the theory of political economy as stated in the theoretical framework of this study.

In the final analysis, this study states that these vectors of economic change – oil exploration and Land Use Act of 1978 – were vectors of negative economic change in Ogoni economy.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above findings, the study recommends as stated below.

Ogoni people should be granted the right to control their resources to avoid throwing the people into hunger, poverty and deepened underdevelopment. This explains why it amounts to exploitation, internal colonialism and slavery because a people on whose soil petroleum products are mined are not partakers in the wealth process<sup>1</sup>.

The Land Use Act of 1978 should be amended and the people should be made to exercise ownership right. The people should be allowed to exercise their legal freedom by challenging Federal and State Governments where necessary, where Federal and State Governments forcefully acquire their land. This explains why it is said that the Land Use of Act of 1978 should be repealed to bring about peace and development in Ogoni<sup>2</sup>.

Federal Government should embark on comprehensive environmental clean up of oil polluted sites in Ogoni.

Federal Government, State Government, Local Government and Niger Delta Development Commission should construct sustainable water projects in all Ogoni communities. This will replace the polluted drinking water of the people.

Federal Government and Niger Delta Development Commission should establish a National Centre for Environmental Research at Ogoni.

The principle of revenue derivation should be practised fully as it will enable State Government to take good care of oil producing communities negatively affected by oil exploration. Based on this, it is said that there should be an upward review of the revenue allocation formula to enhance the performance of State Government<sup>3</sup>.

The major players in Ogoni oil industry should practise the best gas flaring system in Ogoni. The oil industry should practise the system of injecting sufficient air and oxygen into the pipeline system and abandon the "open pipe flame". This "open pipe flame" should be stopped because it degrades the environment when the environment is the basis of human existence<sup>4</sup>.

There should be call on international organisations and institutions to join forces with civil right groups in Nigeria to call the oil company in Ogoni to order and impress upon them the necessity to operate with regards to the best practices. This is because the environmental disasters generated by the oil industry in Ogoni do not only affect Ogoni people but contribute to global disasters in the areas of global warming and depletion of the ozone layer. This explains why it is said that the pollutants translate into large scale poisoning of the environment<sup>5</sup>.

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2.	Akeke Peter Ntobie	Farming	Zor-Sogho	68	12/04/2016
3.	Akpo Lenu	Farming	Kpong	67	18/07/2016
4.	Amade Barine	Civil Service	Kpite	45	21/09/2015
5.	Amba .O.	Civil Service	Ebubu-Elemé	42	18/11/2015
6.	Asukpughi Tordee .F.	Civil Service	Zor-Sogho	58	27/6/2016
7.	Awii-ue Friday	Civil Service	Zor-Sogho	51	20/06/2016
8.	Baridoo .D.	Civil Service	Baan-Lueku	50	22/11/2015
9.	Barisi Benson	Teaching	Kpor-Gokana	58	18/7/2016
10.	Beeteh .C.	Retired Farmer	Zor-Sogho	62	10/11/2015
11.	Beeteh Fynface .N.	Farming	Zor-Sogho	32	14/10/2016
12.	Chief .F.E. Amasi-tito	Civil Service	Agbeta	58	19/09/2016
13.	Chief Gbeneneé Agbozi	Adhoc Staff of Okwale Rison Palm	Okwale	50	30/08/2016
14.	Deekor .S.	Retiree	Baan-Lueku	75	30/11/2015
15.	Dorbu, D.	Retired from active Life	Zor-Sogho	73	03/12/2015
16.	Dr. Medee Peter	Civil Service	University of Port Harcourt	48	9/03/2016
17.	Dr. Poronaakie Nwi-eekpughi	Civil Service	Zaakpong	50	28/05/2016
18.	Dumle Lue	Civil Service	Mogho-Gokana	40	27/6/2016
19.	Eedee Nbanee	Farming	Bunu-Tai	58	17/07/2016
20.	Gbarabiara Saturday	Civil Service	Biara-Gokana	50	12/6/2016
21.	Gbaramii, D.	Retired Civil Servant	Taabaa	68	18/09/2015
22.	Gininwa, D.	Civil Service	Korokoro Tai	42	17/11/2016
23.	HRH G.N.K. Gininwa	First Class Chief	Korokoro-Tai	72	21/09/2015
24.	HRH. W.Z.P. Nziidee	First Class Chief	Luusue-Sogho	75	20/09/2015



<b>S/N</b>	<b>Names of Informant</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
25.	Ihua Mutuenyi	Civil Servant	Etche	48	26/05/2016
26.	Jaja G.I	Public Servant	NDDC office in Port Harcourt	54	13/07/2017
27.	Karikpo, P.B.	Retired Civil Servant	Nwe-ol	67	19/09/2015
28.	Koma Promise	Public Servant	Port Harcourt	42	13/07/2017
29.	Kpone-Tonwe, .S.	Retiree	University of Port Harcourt	72	10/11/2015
30.	Kpuinen S.D.	Retiree	Bera-Gokana	63	02/10/2015
31.	Lekia .Z.	Farming	Bodo	67	10/11/2015
32.	Lekia Anya	Civil Service	Kpaa	50	15/08/2016
33.	Loolo I.N.	Civil Servant	Opu-Okoko	51	18/09/2015
34.	Maakue Sunday .S.	Civil Service	Okwale	50	18/09/2015
35.	Maekae Psalm	Retiree	Zor-Sogho	62	18/09/2015
36.	Mbanadam .N.	Retired Farmer	Zor-Sogho	78	30/11/2015
37.	Mkpagadam Paago	Farming	Zor-Sogho	68	27/06/2015
38.	Nbaakee Paul	Retired Public Servant	Barakaani-Sogho	100	15/11/2015
39.	Nbura Pyagbara	Farming	Zor-Sogho	69	18/07/2016
40.	Ndii Joy	Public Service	Kabangha	38	20/11/2016
41.	Ndeele Ernest	Civil Service	Bunu-Tai	34	17/07/2016
42.	Ndorbu Edward	Hospital Driver	Deken-Gokana	64	25/05/2016
43.	N-epba Dimkpa	Retired Farmer	Zor-Sogho	70	10/11/2015
44.	Ngei Laleobe	Civil Service	Aleto	54	15/08/2016
45.	Nkabaari .B.	Farming	Zor-Sogho	62	16/11/2015
46.	Nkpae Sampson	Civil Service	Bori	50	10/08/2016
47.	Nkpagadam Goeteh	Business	Zor-Sogho	48	15/06/2016
48.	Nkpagwu Blessing	Business	Awka	27	08/06/2016
49.	Nlenee .M.	Chief	Luusue	72	16/11/2015
50.	Nnaylor .N.	Farming	Zor-Sogho	68	19/11/2015

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Names of Informant</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
51.	Ntaagha .N.	Retired Civil Servant	Barakaani	62	15/11/2015
52.	N-ue Ue-Bari .S.	Civil Service	Zor-Sogho	46	05/06/2016
53.	Nuka Nzor	Civil Service	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt	48	12/03/2016
54.	Nwi-alunee Ntor-ue	Retiree	Zor-Sogho	70	12/03/2016
55.	Nwimumuna Christopher	Civil Service	Ban-Ogoi	48	17/07/2016
56.	Nzuh Le-akor R.	Retiree	Teka-Sogho	69	27/06/2015
57.	Odike Ebenezer	Civil Service	Kira-Tai	50	20/09/2015
58.	Orji Awtala	Civil Servant	Ogale in Eleme	58	20/05/2016
59.	Osaro George	Farming	Ebubu in Eleme	65	18/05/2016
60.	Osuala J.N.	Farming	Akporo-Sogho	64	03/10/2015
61.	Pastor Nwoke David	Christian Priesthood	Aleto	56	15/08/2016
62.	Poi .B.	Retired Farmer	Nwenbiara	72	20/09/2015
63.	Poromaa Celestine	Civil Service	Kpite-Tai	45	20/09/2015
64.	Pyagbara Regina	Civil Service	Bodo-Gokana	49	12/06/2016
65.	Wiri W.D.	Christian Priesthood	Okwale	68	21/09/2015
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## APPENDIX

### PLATE 5.9.1: LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE OF OGO NI TO GOVERNMENT PROTESTING GOVERNMENT'S ACQUISITION OF THEIR LAND



GOVERNMENT OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA

OFFICE OF THE HON. COMMISSIONER  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

BLOCK A, 5TH FLOOR, RIVERS STATE SECRETARIAT COMPLEX, PORT HARCOURT

The paramount Ruler  
Sogho Community  
Khana Local Government Area  
Rivers State.

15<sup>th</sup> May, 2011

#### ESTABLISHMENT OF A BANANA FARM IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

The Rivers State Government has approved the establishment of a commercial banana farm in your community.

The project is in partnership with a Mexican firm which will be responsible for the day to day running of the farm to ensure sustainability.

In furtherance of the above, a team of land surveyors have been employed to do the survey of a area in order to ascertain the actual hectares of land available for the project.

Please note that this has nothing to do with any project relating to the Nigerian Army as is being rumored.

Your cooperation is therefore highly solicited for the success of this project, which will in no small measure employ a huge number of our teeming unemployed youths gainfully.

Thank you.

Elenwo Gladstone

For: Hon. Commissioner for Agriculture.

Cc: HRM Chief G.N.K. Gininwa

Gbenemene Tua tua Tai

Chairman Ogoni Council of Traditional Rulers.

Letter from government indicating interest in acquisition of Ogoni land for Banana project **Source:** Social Action (2013:20)

# **SOGHO/UEKEN COMMUNITIES**

C/O Hon. David Gbaranwi  
Uekoh Town  
Tai Local Govt Area,  
Rivers State.  
Tel: 08037495997

C/O Hon. Prince N. Nzidee  
Luusoe – Sogho  
Khana Local Govt Area,  
Rivers State.  
Tel: 08037070553

16<sup>th</sup> May, 2011

The Honourable Commissioner  
Ministry of Agriculture  
Rivers State.  
Port Harcourt

Sir,

**PROVISIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER FOR ACQUISITION OF  
SOGHO/UEKEN COMMUNITIES LAND FOR AGRO-INDUSTRIAL  
PROJECT.**

We refer to your request in respect of the above subject via series of meetings held and especially through your official correspondence dated 16<sup>th</sup> of May, 2011.

We hereby, on behalf of the Sogho/Uekoh communities communicate to you, our acceptance in principle of your request to acquire and use the Sogho/Uekoh communities land for an agricultural project.

We revoke any Power of Attorney forwarded to your office in respect of the above subject matter as the two communities shall forward to you names of committee members appointed to discuss and negotiate with you in respect of the land acquisition.





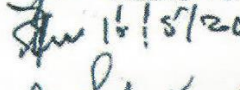
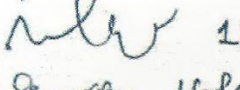

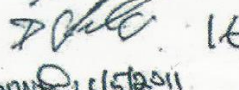
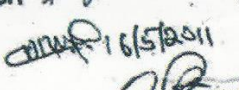

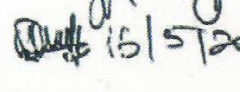

This acceptance is subject to the drawing up of an M.O.U with the foreign investor and the execution of same.

We also hereby pledge our readiness to embrace the project and authorized you to put all machineries into carrying out proper survey of the land without delay.

We are ready to partner with you and solemnly appeal that every negotiation in this regard be done in all honesty and with all sense of responsibility.

We look forward to your next step of action.

We are:-

1. Hon. Prince N. Nzidee - Sogho 
2. Mr. E. N. Nkue - Sogho 
3. Chief Marcus Mkpae - Sogho  16/05/2011
4. Chief Joseph Mpianwi - Sogho  16-05-2011
5. Chief Anthony Ndorbu - Sogho  16/5/2011
6. Mr. Barika Nzidee - Sogho  16-05-2011
7. Chief Cornelius S. Nnaa - Ukeke  16/05/2011
8. Chief Dede Nkpigibue - Ukeke  16/05/2011
9. Chief Agbe George - Ukeke  16/5/2011
10. Hon. David Gbaranwi - Ukeke  16/05/2011
11. Chief Jonathan Kenkpo  16/5/2011
12. Mr. Nnaa Erekpama  16/05/2011

CC

1. HRM Mene G. N. K. Gininwa, JP  
Gbenemene Tai  
President Supreme Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers
2. HRM Mene W. Z. P. Nzidee, JP  
Gbenemene Nyokhana

Letter from those used by government to divide Ogoni in order to acquire the land **Source:** Social Action (2013:21-22)

# THE NIGERIA POLICE



THE NIGERIA POLICE  
Divisional Headquarters  
Tai - Rivers State.

Your Ref: \_\_\_\_\_

Our Ref: **AR:3000/RSTA/VOL.4/94**

Date: **26<sup>th</sup> August, 2011.**

Chief Nuka Ggbenekuapie  
Ueken Community  
Tai L.G.A.  
Rivers State.

## INVITATION FOR A DISCUSSION

You are cordially invited for a discussion with the DPO Tai scheduled  
to hold as follows:

Venue:.....DPO's Office


Date:.....29/08/2011.

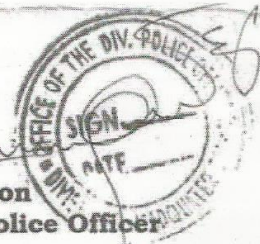
Time:..... 10.00 am prompt.

Note: You are to come along with the following people:-

1. Chief Lucky Agbe
2. Mr. Joseph Nsua
3. Mr. Godfrey Kpobe

Your prompt attendance is highly solicited, please.

  
SP A.D Lawson  
Divisional Police Officer  
Tai.



Letter from Nigerian Police inviting a chief of Ueken community who refused to approve government acquisition of his land for Banana Plantation Project





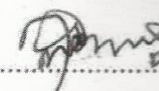
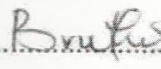


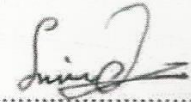
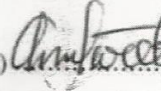
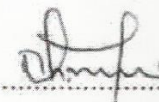
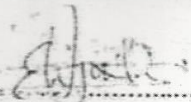
**Source:** Social Action (2013:23)

### UEKEN COMMUNITY SAY NO TO ACQUISITION OF THEIR LAND

Following the recent incidence in Ueken Community for which the Ueken people and all Land owners got up in the early hours of the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of May, 2011 to witness a very gruesome attack on their vicinity, with plants, economic crops, trees and animals both wild and domestic destroyed by a team of military surveyors and persons all acting on behalf and under the directive of Rivers State Government in its claim to have acquired over 95% of the Ueken peoples' land for the purported "banana plantation" farm and following also the meeting of the Ueken people held on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2011, we the entire Ueken people of Tai in the Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State as ably represented by the undersigned do hereby this 10<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2011 resolve and state as follows:

1. That the purported acquisition of over 95% of the entire Ueken Land and the subsequent destruction of all their economic crops, plants and animals by the Rivers State Government without consulting the Ueken people is unjust, unfair, humiliating and therefore unacceptable to us.
2. That the purported acquisition has robbed the entire Ueken people who are mainly farmers of their means of livelihood and therefore unwelcome.
3. That the letters signed by some persons from Tai no matter how highly placed and six persons from Ueken which are not Landlords purporting to represent or acting on behalf of Ueken community is at their own instance and not on the behalf or representing the Ueken community and therefore of no effect.
4. That the said proposed project of banana plantation has no economic bearing on the people of Ueken community and therefore we say no to it
5. That owing to paragraphs 1-4 above we the entire people of Ueken community condemn in strong terms the purported acquisition and destruction and accordingly advise the Rivers State Government to look else where for land for the said project.

Signed by the following on behalf of themselves and as representing the Ueken people of Tai.

- (1)  2-8-2011  
**Chief Dimkpa Menew**  
 (Mene Buc Dum-Ueken T.)  
 (Chairman)
- (2)  02-08-2011  
**Chief Lucky Agbe**  
 (Mene Buc Gbara Ueken Tai)  
 (Secretary)
- (3)  02/08/011  
**Chief Sunday Ndiike**  
 (Mene Buc Gbor Ueken Tai)
- (4)   
**Chief Jacob Nkpakpe**  
 (Mene Buc Ka Ueken Tai)
- (5)  02-08-2011  
**Sir Festus Ndozne (K.S.C)**
- (6)  2/8/2011  
**Mr. Sam Brutus Ndame**
- (7)  02/08/2011  
**Mr. Godfrey Kpobe**
- (8) .....  
**Mr. Nwielkpigi Naamene**
- (9) .....  
**Mr. Keanyia Nnaa**
- (10)   
**Mr. Dornu Ozookpe**
- (11)   
**Chief Michael Nsubek**
- (12)  2/08/011  
**Pastor Jude Nbugere**
- (13)  2/8/2011  
**Isaac Kamanu**
-   
 .....  
**Rev. Canon Elijah K.M. Subelo**  
 (Spokesman)

Letter from Ueken community refusing to approve government seizure of their land **Source:** Social Action (2013:24-25)