

OIL COMPANY-COMMUNITY CONFLICTS AND DEVELOPMENT REALITIES IN THE NIGER DELTA: THE BAYELSA STATE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The conflict-development literature establishes the fact that conflict inhibits growth and development in society. Scholars have argued that conflict is a major cause of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. Conversely, this research paper showed that conflict has the potential for community development as seen in the oil company-community conflicts in Bayelsa state. This research investigated oil company-community conflicts as it affects development in oil producing communities. The survey research design was used with questionnaire, focus group discussions, interviews and personal observations as instruments for the collection of primary data. Findings showed that oil company-community conflicts promote development in oil producing communities in Bayelsa state. This however, was predicated on certain conditions. The study recommends among others that (1) oil companies should respond promptly to community agitations in order to secure social license to operate as well as ensure community development; (2) communities should elect credible and enlightened individuals to occupy leadership positions.

Key words: community, conflict, development, oil company, Bayelsa

1. Introduction

The literature on conflict and development is dominated by scholars who looked at conflict as a constraint to development. Several scholars have argued that violent conflict is the major inhibiting factor to development and peace building both locally and internationally. In as much as this is true, scholars have not adequately looked at the probable positive outcomes of conflict realities as captured in some places. Conflict no doubt impacts negatively on development, for instance, Frances, S (2002); Osagie J, Akinpelu F, and Adegoke (2010), said that violent conflicts are a major cause of poverty, underdevelopment and ill health in poor countries in general and the Niger Delta in particular. In the same vein, Awori (cited in Ibaba 2011) states that conflict is the major hindrance to

development in the African continent. It inflicts human suffering through death, destruction of livelihoods, constant displacement and insecurity.

Violent conflicts disrupt the process of production, create conditions for pillage of the countries' resources and divert their application from development purposes to servicing war. Violent conflict is thus responsible for perpetuating misery and underdevelopment in the continent. In this regard Ikejiaku (2009) posits that no country bedeviled with the problem of peace and stability in its societal milieu could progress. According to him, whenever conflict occurs, the development of the society in most times is seriously affected.

Some other scholars have attributed the inability of some countries to achieve the millennium development goals (MDG) and economic growth to the persistence of conflict in the countries. According to the World Bank (cited in Clark, H annual foreign policy lecture 2013), countries affected by conflict and fragility lag behind the most in MDG achievement, accounting for 77 per cent of infant deaths, 65 per cent of world's population lacking access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and sixty per cent of the world's undernourishment. In like manner, Christine and Ibrahim (2008) have attributed the widening income gap and inability of Sub-Saharan African countries to achieve economic growth to the prevalence of conflicts in the continent.

Conflicts in the Niger Delta and its negative impact can also be seen in different areas of the region and in different dimension. There is no doubt that conflict has undermined the development of the Niger Delta region (Okoh, R. 2005; Akinola and Obi in Ibaba & Arugu 2013; Onwubiko, F. Azizan, A. Khairuddin I, 2013; Akpuru-Aja in Arugu, L. 2013; Ibaba 2011; Nwakwo 2015; Ibaba and Etekpe 2013; Wennerbeck, S. 2015; International Crisis Group 2015; Partnership Initiative for the Niger Delta report 2017; Stakeholder democracy network 2018). The implication of the above fact is that whenever and wherever conflict occurs, the development of that particular society is always affected adversely. However, the gap this study investigated was the hypothesis of probable positive impact of conflict in the Niger Delta, especially with focus on oil company-community conflict. The study therefore raised the following critical questions:

- 1) Does conflict inhibit or promote development in the Niger Delta
- 2) How do Oil Companies respond to community agitations?

- 3) Do oil companies' response to community agitations with social amenities promote development in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta (Bayelsa State)

Thus, the specific objectives of this research paper are to:

- 1) Determine the impact of conflict on the development of oil producing communities in Bayelsa State.
- 2) Evaluate how the responses of multinational oil companies to conflict impacts on the development of oil producing communities in the Niger Delta with specific focus on Bayelsa State.

2. Analytic Framework: Political Economy

The Political economy theory was used as frame work for analysis with emphasis on the productive forces. The theory lays primacy on the material condition (economic) of the social production system which plays decisive role on other aspects of the non-economic systems such as the political system, social system, belief systems, ideological system etc. The theory gives a comprehensive and holistic view of society and places premium on the social production system as the determining factor for social change. The economic system however, does not operate in isolation as it is also influenced by other social systems like the political and belief systems (Ake, 1982). In essence, the entire systems are interdependent as none can operate in isolation.

This paper focused on the productive forces as basis for its analysis. The state of the development of the productive forces decisively influences social organization, culture, the level of welfare and even consciousness (Ake, 1982). Changes in the production forces therefore gives rise to new forms of social relations of production that shapes the socio-political dynamics of a given society (Ake, 1982). The productive forces however keep improving through practice, learning and teaching (Ogban, 2018). The improvement of the productive forces leads to the succession of a new and higher mode of production. The means of production (object of labour and means of labour) however, in social production like in the capitalist economy, is captured by few persons who use it as a means of exploitation, domination, intimidation, self-enrichment and creates inequality in the society. The relation in the social production system of such society is always antagonistic as groups/classes

struggle for access to resources for survival. They co-operate, fight, and quarrel in such struggle for the means of production (Ogban 2018). The distribution of the wealth in such society is also a major source of conflict. The conflicts and the contradictions in such social production system are the very vehicles of change and progress (Ake, 1982).

The gradual improving nature of the productive forces especially, the human capital, led to movement of the people from a class in-itself to a class for-itself (a state of consciousness of exploitation and the exploiter), which in turn led to series of agitations and violent conflicts between the people and the government/oil companies. The outcome of these conflicts most often, promotes development in hitherto 'not developed' areas. No wonder Ake (1982) posits that conflict and contradictions in society are the very vehicles for change and progress. Now, this point has not been adequately captured in the conflict-development literature especially, as it relates to oil company-community conflict in Bayelsa state. This research work therefore, seeks to close this gap by generating empirical data to either support or disprove the argument of this work within the scope of the study area.

3.0. Literature Review

3.1. Oil-related Conflicts in the Niger Delta

Conflicts in the Niger Delta started way back in the pre-colonial and the colonial eras. These conflicts at its initial stages were not oil related as they were more of conflicts emanating from claims over land/fishing rights, traditional political jurisdiction and trade relations, first amongst the people, and secondly, with the British merchants. The communities were interfacing and communicating with each other and therefore conflicts ensued in different forms (Charles, 2012). Agitations for development attention by the people of the region is however, traceable to the colonial era when the fear of domination and neglect by the three majority ethnic groups of Hausa, Igbo and the Yorubas led to the demands for state creation and other safe guards (Ibaba and Etekpe 2013).

The agitations for development as demanded by the people turned violent in 1966 when late Isaac Adaka Boro took up arms against the State. According to Ibaba and Etekpe (2013), the conflict at this period was not directly linked to oil, probably due to the fact that oil was not the main stay of the

Nigerian economy. The Niger Delta region was marked with the discovery of oil and the subsequent exploration of crude oil at Oloibiri in present Bayelsa state, Nigeria in 1956. Since then, oil production and its socio-economic and environmental impacts transformed the Niger Delta from a relatively insignificant region into one of significant geopolitical importance at the national and international level (Uwafiokun & Item, 2006). It is important to note here however, that the local and international recognition and prominence of the region is seen more to the negative impact of oil exploration and exploitation activities on the people and environment of the Niger Delta than the expected positive benefits to be derived from oil production.

Over the years, the Niger Delta region has moved from a relatively peaceful region in the 1960s, to a region prone to periodic intermittent conflict in the 1980s, and finally to an outright unstable region with persistent violence since the 1990s. Owugah in (Nnimmo B, 2015) has delineated these periods into four periods of violent resistance of the people against the state and the oil multinationals. According to him, the first phase was from 1970- mid 1980s. This was when the people had confidence in the state and its instruments – especially the judiciary- and focused on nonviolent methods of demanding justice through petitions as a key tool for expressing discontent and demanding justice. However, the experience was largely been one of gross disappointment for aggrieved communities, as oil companies blatantly ignored favourable court judgments and in some cases used legal technicalities to constantly delay implementations of judicial pronouncements of legal proceedings.

The second phase was mid 1980s-mid 1990s when the people relied on peaceful demonstrations as a more action-oriented strategy to press home their demands. Again, according to Owugah in Nnimmo B (2015), the people were disappointed, as the oil companies were confident of support from the Nigerian state which responded by calling on the military, police and the state security operatives, which the state had put at their disposal. The third phase was between mid 1990s – 1998 when the people alongside peaceful engagements, adopted more forceful engagement strategies to drive home their demands. The last phase was from December 1998- June 2009 when amnesty was declared by the Nigerian government. It was expected however, that with the declaration of the amnesty deal, the conflicts would have stopped or reduced drastically in the region. On the contrary, according to the World Bank and the National Bureau

of Statistics (2018) report, the violent conflicts continued to increase from 2010-2016.

The conflict in the Niger Delta especially from the 1990s has been attributed to myriad of factors often subjected to multiple interpretations. These several factors may not be unconnected with the oil mineral resource and the benefits accruing from its exploitation. For instance, scholars (Sofiri, Doug P, and Michael W, 2012; Zandvleit& Pedro cited in Uwafiokun& Ite 2006) have identified some types of violent conflict, agents, actors and the conflict dynamics in the region as:

- i. Violent conflicts between oil companies and community youth groups
(over compensation, employment, and access to cash payments)
- ii. Conflicts between communities and companies over host community status, spill compensation (or ritual/cultural site desecration) and MOUs (Ugborodu, Soku)
- iii. Electoral violence and political thuggery
- iv. Intra and/or inter-community conflicts over rights to oil-bearing lands
- v.
Youth group violence over access to local oil rents and by providing protection services for oil companies
- vi. Violent chieftaincy struggles
- vii. State violence and abuses by security forces
- viii. Urban violence/electoral, ward and LGA determination
- ix. Struggles over oil-bunkering territories
- x. Inter-ethnic territorial conflicts
- xi. Insurgent groups (MEND)
- xii.
Organised crime and violent accumulation (kidnapping as business, piracy)

These are all forms of conflict in the Niger Delta that is oil induced. Oil-related conflicts started from the 1970s when oil became the main stay of Nigeria's economy. These conflicts as it were, was first, between oil producing host communities and the multinational oil companies for claims over damages and environmental degradation and secondly, against the security apparatus of the State. Omofonmwan and Odia (2017), noted that part of the reasons for the conflict was due mainly to the inability of the multinational companies involved

in the exploration and exploitation of crude oil, and the federal government to adequately mitigate the consequences of their activities in the region.

Oil-related conflicts in the Niger Delta took both local and international dimensions. For instance, the incessant intra and inter communal conflicts, boundary disputes within and between states, chieftaincy tussles, arms proliferation and electoral violence, kidnapping of international expatriates which attracted the attention of foreign governments, are all linked to issues of struggle for ownership, control and access to the oil wealth. In all, oil is writ large in escalating violence in the Niger Delta, which has since 2006 resulted in the cutting of Nigeria's oil exports by twenty-five percent, and a revenue loss estimated to be around 4.4 billion US dollars (Cyril, 2009)

3.2. Impact of Oil-related Conflicts on Community Development in the Niger Delta

In interrogating the conflict-development nexus, scholars differed in their argument in determining the dimensions of impact of the variables such as conflict, development and underdevelopment on each other. While some scholars hold the view that the major cause of conflict in society is the poor state of development manifested in high unemployment, deepened poverty, high level illiteracy, human right abuses, marginalization, lack of access to basic social amenities, vertical and horizontal inequality, political and economic exclusion and domination, low economic growth, environmental degradation (Ikejiaku 2009; Namsuk and Conceicao, P 2010; Debraj, J and Estebarn, J. 2017; Ibaba 2005), which in turn impacts on development, others have argued that rather than underdevelopment causing conflict which in turn impacts on development, it is conflict impacting negatively on development that results in underdevelopment. Some have attributed Africa's level of underdevelopment to series of violent conflicts (Awori in Ibaba 2011; Christine and Ibrahim 2008). Another line of argument is that it is development itself that creates conflict which in turn impacts on development.

Whatever the point of arguments may be, the line of agreement amongst the various viewpoints is that conflict impacts negatively on development. Violent conflicts no doubt have impacted negatively both socially, economically, culturally, politically and otherwise wherever it occurred. It leads to high unemployment and loss of livelihood opportunities, diversion of

development funds for post conflict reconstruction, forced migration and displacements, increased poverty and illiteracy, death/ loss of lives (Aremu 2010, Namsuk and Conceicao 2010, Mansoob 2002, Marcartan and Ashutosh 2004). For instance, in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda about 800,000 Rwandans were reportedly massacred, the Burundi civil war claimed over 200,000 lives as at the year 2000, in Liberia, over 250,000 lives were lost in the country's fourteen-year civil war between 1990 and 2004 (Global Coalition report cited in Aremu, 2010). In Sierra Leone an estimated 200,000 people were killed during the nation's civil war between 1991 and 2001 while Sudan an estimated two million persons lost their lives during the wars (Global Coalition report cited in Aremu, 2010: Mansoob 2002). Similarly, between 1998 and 2002, some four million people died in the civil war in DRC (report on the Commission for Africa 2005). Statistics revealed that there are 13 million displaced people in Africa, particularly due to conflicts and 3.5 million refugees (RCA, 2005 in Aremu, 2010).

The costs of conflicts are horrific, and in many cases conflicts wiped out the achievements of decades of economic and social development. Armed conflicts, in particular, involve complete economic paralysis, immense social costs and trauma, political quagmire and disintegration, as well as serious environmental degradation and dilapidation (Ikejiaku, 2009).

Nigeria is not immune from conflict and its negative impact as the country has been engulfed in a myriad of conflict right from independence in 1960. The country has witnessed ethnic, religious and political base conflicts which had tremendous set back on its socio-economic and political development. These conflicts have equally threatened the existence of the nation and its development. The conflicts in the North-Eastern part of the country and the South-South in particular have affected the nation immensely. At the North-East for instance, activities of the Boko Haram sect such as rape, kidnap, bombings of public places like the churches, markets, Police stations, Motor parks, killings have had devastating effect on the region in particular and the Nigerian nation in general.

Several lives and properties worth millions of Dollars have been lost to these violent attacks. For instance, it is estimated that over 10, 000 Nigerians have been killed and maimed by the Boko Haram sect since 2009 (Oladayo 2014). In 2016 alone, there were 3,147 fatalities of Boko Haram attacks in

Nigeria. From June 1, 2006 to 31 May 2016, it has led to a total of 32,842 fatalities (Nigeria Watch Project 2016). In addition, farmers and herdsmen clashes especially in Benue and Plateau States have recorded several deaths and destruction of properties and livelihood opportunities. In 2017, clashes between nomadic herdsmen and local farmers resulted in at least 549 deaths and thousands displaced across Enugu, Benue, Taraba, Zamfara, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Cross Rivers, Adamawa, Katsina, Delta and Ekiti States (Amnesty International in Ameh 2018). In oil production for instance, it was estimated that the country lost an average of 21,700,000 barrels of oil daily between 2006 and 2008, leading to a total loss of 781,200,000 barrels and the sum of \$41,504,298,800 (NDTCR cited in Ibaba, 2011). The drastic reduction in oil production and the threat that it posed on the national economy made the Nigerian government to proclaim amnesty to the militia combatants who had taken up arms against the State (Ibaba, 2018).

Looking critically at the conflict-development nexus in the Niger Delta, there appear to be a scenario that negates what the literature says. Whereas it is not doubtful that the violence in the region has undermined the development of the region as evidently captured by Okoh, R. 2005; Akinola and Obi in Ibaba&Arugu 2013; Onwubiko, Fredrick Jnr, Azizan, Idris et al 2013; Akpuru-Aja in Arugu 2013; Ibaba 2011; Nwakwo 2015; Ibaba and Etekpe 2013; Sophia 2015; International Crisis Group 2015; PIND report 2017; SDN 2018, a point that has not been adequately investigated is the view that conflicts in the region have promoted development by attracting the attention of the federal government and oil companies to the development plight of the area. For example, Okoko (1998) noted in a report that community protests in the region were on the increase because oil companies responded to protests with community development projects; thus promoting a cycle of violence as more protests meant more development infrastructure. Significantly, the literature has under indicated this, thus creating a gap that requires investigation. This study is motivated by the need to close this gap by generating empirical data to determine the dimensions of the peace-development nexus that captures the reality in the Niger Delta.

4. Research Methodology

This research adopted the survey research design. Primary data was sourced using questionnaire, interview and direct observation and complimented with secondary sources of data. The study employed the probability and non-probability sampling methods such as simple random sampling, stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques. In the specifics, data was collected from women and youth groups, community leadership, students, civil servants' resident in the communities and business owners. Data was also sourced from conflict and development experts who are knowledgeable in the subject matter. Data were presented using tables and charts and analysis done based on interpreted data, highlighting the implications of the findings. A total of four (4) communities were sampled (Ogbolomabiri, Imiringi, Oporoma and Ogboloma). 50 persons per community were sampled making a total of 200 persons sampled.

5. Data Presentation

Table 1: On whether Communities Have Been Involved in Conflict with Oil Companies

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	185	100
No	N/A	N/A
Total	185	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2019.

The data presented in Table 1 above shows that a total of 185 respondents representing 100% of the sampled population said they have been involved in conflict with the oil companies operating in their various communities. Ogboloma community is host to SPDC, Imiringi host SPDC as well, Oporoma is host to both SPDC and NAOC while Ogbolomabiri is host to NAOC and AITEO.

Table 2: Data showing the Nature of Oil Company-Community Conflicts.

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Violent	142	76.7
Peaceful	43	23.2
Total	185	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2019.

The presentation in Table 2 showing the nature of the conflicts in the communities indicates that 142 respondents, representing 76.7% of sampled population said the conflicts have been violent, while 43 (23.2%) of the respondents said the conflicts were peaceful in nature. Community members traced the evolution of these conflicts into different stages of its development. According to the responses, most conflicts started peacefully especially at the early beginning of oil production in the communities. The peaceful conflicts which took the form of sending delegation to the locations and offices of the companies to make demands and express grievance, sending of protest letters to the company and the government of the state etc, were more on issues of compensation for damages and employment opportunity. Responses from the communities indicate that the conflicts became violent along the line. For instance, responses from Oporoma community indicate that the community have had violent conflicts with the company (SPDC) in 2001, 2006, 2014 and 2019. Also, Nembe community also had violent conflicts with AGIP/ AITEO in 1998 and May, 2019.

Table 3: Data Showing Oil Company Response Pattern to Community Protest/Violent Agitations

Options	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Counter attack from the company with the use of force	53	28.6
Dialogue/negotiation	28	15.1
Silence/ no action	17	9.1
Responded with social development projects	87	47.0
Total	185	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2019.

Table 3. above indicates that 53 respondents representing 28.6% said the companies responded with counter attack using the military force, 28 respondents accounting for 15.1% said dialogue/negotiation, 17 persons accounting for 9.1% said the response pattern of the companies is silence/ no action and 87 respondents, representing 47.0% said the companies responded to community protest/violent agitations with social development projects such as the provision of electricity, secondary and tertiary education scholarship, pipe borne water, construction of primary school buildings, roads, provision of community library, town hall and employment opportunities.

Table 4: On Whether the Community Demands were Responded to After the Conflicts

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	109	58.9
No	76	41.0
Total	185	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2019.

The data presented in Table 4 shows that 109 respondents, representing 58.9% of the total sampled population said their demands were responded to by the oil companies after the conflicts while 76 of the respondents representing 41.0% of

the sampled population said their demands were not responded to even after the conflicts

Table 5: On the Impact of Development Projects in the Community.

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly impacted	106	57.2
Fairly impacted	44	23.7
Neutral	15	8.1
Not impacted	21	11.3
Total	185	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2019

The Table 5 above indicates that 106 respondents representing 57.2% of the total sampled population said the development projects have strongly impacted on the communities, 44 respondents, representing 23.7% said it has fairly impacted on the community, 15 respondents representing 8.1% were neutral and 21 representing 11.3% said the projects have not impacted the communities.

Table 6: On the Level of Development Before the Conflicts

Option	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
Highly developed	10	5.4
Somehow developed	39	21.0
Less developed	125	67.5
Undeveloped	11	5.9
Total	185	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2019

Table 6 above indicates that 10 respondents representing 5.4% of sample said highly developed, 39 representing 21.0% said somehow developed, 125 respondents making 67.5% said less developed and 11 respondents making 5.9% of sample said undeveloped

Table 7: Data Showing the Level of Development After the Conflicts

Option	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
More developed	125	67.5
Fairly developed	14	7.5
Less developed	7	3.7
Undeveloped	39	21.0
Total	185	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2019

The Table 7 indicates that 125 respondents, representing 67.5% of total sampled population said the community is more developed, 14 respondents, representing 7.5% said fairly developed, 7 respondents, representing 3.7% said less developed and 39 representing 21.0% said the community is undeveloped even after the conflict.

6. Analysis of Data

Findings from Table 1 shows that all four communities sampled have all gone into conflict with the oil companies that have operated and are still operating in their areas. All 158 respondents, representing 100% of the total retrieved questionnaires indicates that they have had violent conflicts with the companies (SPDC, AGIP, AITEO, DAWOO etc) on several occasions. It is revealing however, that these conflicts started non-violently in its early stages but turned violent along the line. According to a community leader in Ogbolomabiri community in Nembe Local Government Area, "we had our first violent conflict

with the oil company in 1974 and then, much more later in 1996, 1998 and most recently on the 5th and 6th May, 2019”.

Findings from the communities showed that violent conflict with the companies actually started from the late 1960s when the relationship between the host communities and the companies got frosty. Findings on the response of the oil companies to community protest and violent agitations showed that oil companies responded with development projects after oil company-community conflicts. 87 respondents (47.0%) of the total sampled population said the companies responded to community development demands at the aftermath of violent confrontations with the companies. During focus group discussions, community members revealed that violence is always applied as the last resort after all avenues for peaceful negotiations and dialogue with the companies fails.

In assessing the level of development of the community before and after the conflicts, findings shows that 125 respondents, making 67.5% said the communities were less developed before the conflicts. On the level of development of the communities after the conflicts, 125 respondents (67.5%) said the communities were more developed after the conflicts while 39 respondents, making 21.0% said the communities were either at the same level of development before the coming of the oil companies and the conflicts or worst off.

7. Discussion of Findings

7.1. Oil Company’s Response to Community Demands

Findings from this research endeavor shows that oil exploration and exploitation activities started in the sampled communities way back 1958, 1962 and the 1970s respectfully. Primarily, the oil companies came for business venture and not as community development agencies or establishments. This primary purpose as such, guided their business operations without recourse to the business environment in which they operate. Over time, the business operations and its negative effects became glaring in the communities in which they operate. This was manifested in form of oil spillages from the international oil companies (IOCs) facilities on the soil and water ways which affected the livelihood activities of the people. The predominate occupation of the people

are fishing and farming. Oronto&Okonta 2018; Duru 2010 affirms this in their separate reports and research findings.

The oil spills and the destruction of crops/farm lands as a result of oil exploration activities prompted reactions from the host communities for compensations over claims for damages. These non-violent demands from the host communities were treated with disdain. The communities as earlier highlighted from the research finding, made efforts to invite the companies for dialogue meetings for which they (company) would not honour, they also send delegations on several occasions to the companies including writing protest letters but to no avail. This 'slow' or 'no response approach' from the oil companies to the demands of host communities especially as it affects their livelihood, impacted negatively on the people. It also created intra-communal conflicts between individuals and groups as the people scramble for the few available lands, ponds and creeks that has not been polluted by oil spill for fishing and farming. The frustrations arising from the above community efforts in dragging the attention of the oil companies to their plight, triggered the violent approach in driving home their demands. This violent approach by the host communities got the attention of both the government and the oil multinationals. According to a community member of Oporoma, "violence is the only language understood by the oil companies, so we have to apply it". In the same vein, Charles (2012), said, violence has become an engagement strategy of the people of the Niger Delta in demanding for development attention. This violent approach of the people in attracting the attention of the oil companies to both the environmental and development needs of the community paid-off. Findings showed that oil companies responded by meeting community demands (development projects) when violence was applied. Hence it became an engagement strategy of the people as earlier noted by Charles (2012). For instance, at Ogbolomabiri community, the oil pipeline surveillance employment increased from 140 employees to over 300 employees after the recent violent conflict.

Secondly, the community had just one Generator before the conflict with less capacity to service the entire community due to increase in population and number of houses. They were however, given two special electricity generating plant just immediately after the recent violent conflict that occurred between 5 and 6th of May, 2019. Meanwhile, the demand for the Generator has

been on for a long time. It was only released when the community applied violence to the demand. The AITEO Company in addition employed 20 indigenes as spy Police including some as Caterers after the violent conflict with the community.

Oporoma community for the first time witnessed the construction of the first major road in 1994/95 after a violent conflict erupted between the community and the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). Prior to the conflict, the community had no such road. The community which hitherto did not have pipe born water was given one in 2018 just after another major conflict between the SPDC and the community. The people believed that it is the only way they can use in getting what they want, hence the increase in oil company-community conflict. This finding was corroborated by Okoko (1998) when he said oil companies respond to community demands with community development projects, thereby creating a circle of violence in the host communities because more protest meant more development projects. So, from the 'low' or 'no response approach' of the oil company which impacted negatively on community development prior to the application of violence, it moved to a stage where the companies responded with development projects with the application of violence. This second response pattern of the oil companies impacted positively on community development. Findings equally showed that the communities were less developed before the conflicts and more developed after the conflicts. This finding affirms the argument of this research paper.

7.2. Impact of Violent Conflict on Socio-Economic Development in Oil Producing Communities

Findings from this research showed that conflict has the potential for community development. It impacts positively on the socio-economic development of the rural communities. According to a provision store business owner at Oporoma community, "this light has helped my business a lot. Because of the availability of the light every evening till the next morning, I make more profit now compared to when there was no light". A PET bottle of locally refined petroleum product (about 1 liter) is sold for N300.00 in the community in the absence of community electricity. In a similar development, a welder at Oporoma community in Southern Ijaw local government area said, "I know how much I

spend on a daily basis buying diesel to run my plant, but with the light, the money I use for diesel is now saved”

For him, the quality of life has improved, since he now has additional money to spend with his family. Furthermore, he said, he has employed additional worker since the work load has increased with the purchase of more welding materials from his savings. “I was having just one person working with me, but now I have employed one additional person because of the work load”. The availability of electricity in a community impacts on various aspects of life including improved security and productivity of the people. The constant provision of electricity in the sampled communities from 6pm to 9 or 10am helps the people to plan both their economic and social activities around the period. According to Jimenez (2017) in her research findings, provision of electricity in the evening helped between 142,000 and 2 million children study at home in Kenya, contributing to a higher level of education. She added by saying, it reduces family expenditures for energy services (e.g Kerosene), and equally reduces the emission of Carbon dioxide (Co2) due to reduced Kerosene use which has harmful public health and contributes to global warming.

In Nembe for instance, prior to the construction of the road, the transportation from Yenagoa, the Bayelsa state capital to Nembe town was around N2, 500 but with the presence of the road, the fare is about 700 from Yenagoa the state capital to Nembe community. In another development, according to a community member, we have 3 sea trucks that is hired by the AITEO company which is fetching the community some good money. The electricity has also boosted security and economic activities in Ogbolomabiri community. According to the Ogbolomabiri youth secretary, the community health has also been impacted positively due to the provision of the pipe born water which has drastically reduced the health challenges emanating from the intake of dirty water. “The money we use to treat ourselves with on a regular basis at the health centre, is now saved for other profiting purposes in the family”. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), contaminated drinking water is estimated to cause more than 500,000 diarrheal deaths each year. It emphasized that diseases due to poor drinking water and poor hygiene practice causes 4.0% of all deaths and 5.0% of all disability or ill health in the world. In a related development, its findings showed that in every 5 deaths of children under 5 is due to a water-related disease. That about 80% of illness are

linked to poor water and sanitation conditions. The none availability of potable drinking water in the community like highlighted above, leads to poor health that results in low or poor productivity of the individual.

Similarly, a community elder at Oporoma community in Southern Ijaw local government area of Bayelsa state said, “I am a beneficiary of the shell scholarship, you know what that means”. He further said “we also now have a town hall that enhances community cohesion and unity”. At Ogboloma for instance, according to former women leader, the women through the GMoU implementation built three (3) self-contain apartments which they are giving out for rent. The money is used to carry out women development projects in the community.

This however, is not to say that violent conflicts have not impacted negatively on the communities. The communities have had fair share of the negative impact of violent conflict in terms of destruction of valuable properties like houses, injuries, loss of resources and communal co-existence and at the extreme cases, loss of lives. This has been captured by several research findings (Stakeholder Democracy Network, 2018). However, findings from this research showed that violent conflicts, in this case, oil company-community conflict has supported and promoted community development more than its negative impact in Bayelsa state. As such, it has become an engagement strategy of the communities in agitating for development needs. Findings however, showed that oil company-community conflict does not automatically translate into development. Certain conditions must be in place for such conflicts to translate into community development. Such conditions includes, a transparent and all-inclusive process that collates all development needs of the various segments of the community in its planning and execution stages, an enlightened community leadership/representative capable of negotiating with the companies on identified community development needs and a transparent/effective project management and monitoring committee constituted by the community to monitor awarded development projects.

8. Conclusion Remarks

This paper concludes that oil company-community conflict promotes development in Bayelsa state. Findings showed that virtually all communities sampled have had conflict with the oil companies operating in their vicinities at

different points in time. These conflicts as shown from the data collected have engineered development through the provision of social infrastructure by the oil companies. For instance, communities which hitherto had no access to portable drinking water, electricity etc now have access to these facilities which improved quality of living. Findings revealed that more income is being saved by members of communities as a result of improved health, traceable to portable drinking water.

Again, communities are able to organize both their social and economic life due to the availability of constant electricity at specific periods of the day. According to some business owners, they have been able to make additional money and savings due to the availability of electricity in aiding their businesses.

Some communities were provided with primary and tertiary education scholarship which has enhanced and improved their productivity level and made them more useful both to their immediate families and the community in general. Findings showed that the conflicts changed the companies' response approach to community development, as they (the companies) become more responsive to the development needs of the people in their operational areas. Violence as a strategy became an engagement tactics since it facilitates community development. This accounts for the frequent oil company-community conflicts in Bayelsa state in particular and the Niger Delta in general as noted by Okoko (1998).

Conclusively, findings showed that though oil company-community conflict most often promotes development, certain conditions must however, be in place for such conflicts to actually translated into development.

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