Environmental Remediation Projects and Communal Conflicts in Ogoni, Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

For decades, communities across Ogoniland have struggled with environmental degradation, economic hardship, and deep-seated tensions stemming from large-scale industrial oil production and gas related activities. The region has been the center of numerous projects aimed at reversing environmental damage and improving local livelihoods. And have long awaited remediation. However, the slow pace and perceived inadequacy of cleanup efforts have left many grievances unaddressed, fostering a sense of neglect and injustice among residents. Despite the establishment of agencies like the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), progress has been sluggish. The study therefore sought to examine the influence of environmental remediation projects on communal conflicts in the Niger Delta. The study adopted five research objectives and five research questions. Using the Environmental Justice Theory as a framework, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design and included participants from various stakeholders, including Remediation Agencies (HYPREP), Government officials, Traditional Rulers, community-based organization, community development committee member of selected communities, Youths, Women, environmental regulators and experts from NOSDRA (especially for Rivers South Senatorial Zone) and environmental NGOs. The population of the study was drawn from the four local government areas (LGAs) in Ogoniland (Gokana, Khana, TAI and Eleme). This study employed the multi stage sampling technique, to intentionally select 600 respondents from the above LGAs, who have direct knowledge and experience with environmental remediation projects and communal conflicts in the Niger Delta region. The results of the study revealed that the dominance of youths, women, and livelihood-dependent groups underscores the social sensitivity of remediation initiatives and explains why exclusion, poor quality, and delays often translate into communal unrest, the convergence of stakeholder opinions underscores the centrality of historical grievances in shaping perceptions of remediation projects, the exclusion of communities from policy-making processes emerged as a major driver of resistance, the strong agreement that women demand transparency and improved standards suggests rising gender consciousness and resistance to exclusionary governance. The study recommends the need for involving local communities in decision-making processes, timely execution of projects, quality assurance, and gender-sensitive approaches to mitigate communal conflicts in Ogoniland.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

For decades, communities across the Niger Delta have struggled with environmental degradation, economic hardship, and deep-seated tensions stemming from large-scale industrial oil production and gas related activities. Promises of environmental restoration and economic development have often been met with skepticism, as years of unfulfilled commitments and stalled initiatives continue to shape public perception. The region, known for its vast oil reserves (Iyanam et. al., 2021), has been the center of numerous projects aimed at reversing environmental damage and improving local livelihoods. However, rather than serving as instruments of peace and progress, these interventions have frequently become flashpoints for disagreement and frustration (Ebegbulem, 2022).

A critical concern has been the neglect of historical grievances relating to environmental pollution.

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Communities have long suffered from environmental injustices, with oil spills contaminating land and water sources, devastating local livelihoods. In November 2019 alone, it was estimated that 16,000 infants were at risk within the first month of life due to oil pollution in the Niger Delta (Willie, 2019). Despite such alarming statistics, remediation efforts have often proceeded without adequately addressing these past harms, leading to deep-seated mistrust between communities, the government, and oil companies that extract oil in the region.

Delays and inefficiencies in remediation projects have further exacerbated community frustrations. The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), initiated to address widespread contamination, has faced significant criticism. Leaked documents revealed that HYPREP was deemed a "total failure" by senior United Nation officials, citing mismanagement and the selection of unqualified contractors (Nazil, 2024). Such setbacks have led communities to question the commitment of authorities and corporations to genuine environmental restoration. The exclusion of local voices in decision-making processes has also been a significant issue. Despite being disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, women in the Niger Delta are often excluded from environmental decision-making processes (Nazil, 2024). This exclusion not only marginalizes a vital segment of the population but also hampers the effectiveness of remediation efforts (Rijal, 2023).

Beyond the delays, another major concern is the lack of trust-building measures between stakeholders in the remediation project. Communities have long complained about the top-down approach adopted in executing projects, where decisions are made without genuine input from those directly affected (Richard, 2024). This exclusion breeds resentment, particularly when critical matters – such as site selection for interventions, allocation of resources, or hiring of local labor are handled behind closed doors (Richard, 2024). Without open dialogue and inclusive participation, friction between stakeholders is almost inevitable, leading to frequent protests and even acts of sabotage against ongoing works.

The economic benefits tied to such interventions have also come under scrutiny. Many projects are rolled out with grand promises of infrastructure upgrades and job creation (Edward, 2019). However, in reality, these economic opportunities rarely trickle down to the local populace in a meaningful way. Instead, contracts are often awarded to external firms with little local engagement, leaving communities with little more than cosmetic changes rather than lasting economic empowerment (Edward, 2019). When remediation efforts fail to integrate sustainable development measures, such as road rehabilitation, skill acquisition programs, and job placement initiatives, resentment begins to grow, as communities perceive these efforts as failing to improve their overall quality of life (Edward, 2019).

The Niger Delta has a long and complex history of oil extraction and environmental degradation. This has resulted in the use of various remediation strategies by International Oil Companies (IOCs) over the years. However, some of these strategies have been criticized for their limited effectiveness and transparency. For instant; Traditional Remediation Strategies: Some IOCs, historically, employed strategies such as bribery and settlement of traditional rulers to placate communities affected by environmental degradation. Community Development Programs: Some IOCs invested in community development programs, such as the construction of schools and clinics, as a form of remediation. Critics argue that these programs often failed to address the root causes of the environmental damage and were viewed as inadequate by affected communities. Corporate Social Responsibility: IOCs also implemented Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, such as scholarships and community engagement projects. However, some argue that these programs were insufficient to address the magnitude of environmental damage and resulted in tension and conflict with local communities. Traditional Strategies: Bribery, Settlement of Traditional Rulers, and other Less-Than-Transparent Approaches. Bribery: IOCs have historically used bribery to influence decision-makers, including government officials and community leaders. This has undermined efforts to achieve effective and transparent remediation and created mistrust between affected communities and oil companies. Settlement of Traditional Rulers: Some IOCs sought to settle disputes with communities by making payments to traditional rulers or other influential community members. However, this approach was seen as corrupt and exploitative by many Niger Deltans.

Traditional rulers were often accused of using the payments for their personal gain, while environmental

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damage remained unaddressed. Other Less-Than-Transparent Approaches: IOCs have also relied on other less-than-transparent remediation strategies such as using third-party contractors or consultants with questionable qualifications or integrity. These strategies contributed to a lack of transparency and public trust in the remediation process, leading to increased frustration and conflict within communities. The failure of traditional strategies in the Niger Delta can be attributed to several reasons: Inadequate Resource Allocation: The funds provided by IOCs for remediation were often insufficient to address the extent of the environmental damage, which led to a lack of tangible improvements in affected communities. Community Exclusion: Traditional strategies often excluded community members from decision-making processes, resulting in distrust and resentment. Political Interference: Political interference and corruption undermined remediation efforts, as corrupt politicians and government officials worked with IOCs to benefit from the situation, rather than seeking genuine solutions. Ignoring Root Causes: These strategies often failed to address the root causes of environmental degradation, such as weak regulatory oversight, ineffective enforcement mechanisms, and inadequate community participation in the decision-making process. Effects on Communities: The failure of traditional strategies had significant negative impacts on communities in the Niger Delta, including: Communal Conflict in the Niger Delta: A Look at the Links to Failed Remediation Strategies. The failure of traditional remediation strategies contributed significantly to the communal conflict that plagued the Niger Delta region for decades. One key factor was the perception of injustice among affected communities, who felt that their needs and concerns were ignored in favour of corporate interests. This resentment led to increased distrust between communities and the oil companies, as well as between communities themselves.

Gender disparities in project participation and benefits further complicate the region's challenges. Women, who play crucial roles in agriculture and local economies, are frequently sidelined in remediation projects. Their exclusion not only perpetuates gender inequality but also undermines the socio-economic fabric of communities (Sam and Zibima, 2024). Greater involvement of women is globally believed to enhance environmental management outcomes, yet in the Niger Delta, their voices remain underrepresented. These intertwined issues have culminated in persistent communal conflicts (Sam and Zibima, 2024). The lack of trust-building initiatives, coupled with the exclusion from decision-making processes, has eroded community confidence. Without structured platforms for dialogue, grievances fester, leading to protests, legal battles, and, in some cases, direct confrontations with project implementers.

In recent developments, traditional leaders have sought legal redress against oil companies. For example, King Godwin Bebe Okpabi of the Ogale community confronted Shell in the London High Court over decades of oil spills that have devastated his community (Ritchie, 2016). Addressing these issues requires acknowledging historical grievances, ensuring efficient and inclusive remediation projects, and fostering genuine community engagement. Without these measures, the cycle of environmental degradation and communal conflict is likely to persist. It is in line with this backdrop that this study intends to navigate the complex intersection of environmental remediation project and communal conflicts.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Decades of oil spills have left indelible marks on the Niger Delta's landscape. Between 2011 and 2022, there were 10,463 spill incidents, releasing over 507,135 barrels of oil into the environment (Wekpe et al., 2022). Communities affected by these spills have long awaited remediation. However, the slow pace and perceived inadequacy of cleanup efforts have left many grievances unaddressed, fostering a sense of neglect and injustice among residents. Despite the establishment of agencies like the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), progress has been sluggish. Reports indicate that nearly a decade after cleanup recommendations were made, only a fraction of contaminated sites have seen remediation efforts (Obinna, 2025). Such delays have led to growing impatience and dissatisfaction among local populations, who continue to endure environmental hazards.

The absence of effective trust-building measures between stakeholders has exacerbated tensions. Communities often perceive remediation projects as superficial, lacking genuine commitment to their well-being. This erosion of trust hampers collaboration and fuels suspicion, making it challenging to achieve meaningful progress. Many remediation projects adopt a top-down approach, sidelining the very communities they aim to help. This

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exclusion not only alienates residents but also leads to solutions that fail to address the unique challenges faced by these communities, perpetuating cycles of conflict and mistrust.

While environmental cleanup is crucial, the lack of parallel investments in local infrastructure and employment opportunities leaves communities in a state of stagnation. Without tangible improvements in living conditions and economic prospects, residents struggle to see the benefits of remediation efforts, leading to further disillusionment.

Women who often bear the brunt of environmental degradation due to their roles in agriculture and family care, are frequently excluded from decision-making processes. This gender bias not only undermines the effectiveness of remediation projects but also perpetuates systemic inequalities within these communities.

Remediation has been on for some time now, but researchers and intellectuals have not conducted any study on how the remediation is working. There has been persistence conflict in Ogoni that emanated from remediation program by remediation agency (HYPREP). There is need to conduct proper research to show how the remediation is working. That is the gap that this study explore.

Aim and Objective of the Study

The aim was to enhance the achievement of SDGs 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17. Therefore, the thesis examined the relationship between environmental remediation projects and communal conflicts in Ogoni targeting environmental security.

Specifically, this study is guided by the following objectives to:

i. examine the effects of historical grievances on community trust and perceptions of environmental remediation projects.
ii. assess the impacts of execution delays and efforts on community dissatisfaction and conflict escalation.
iii. evaluate how the exclusion of local communities from policy-making processes contributes to communal resistance.
iv. investigate the relationship between low quality remediation projects and youth restiveness.
v. analyze the effects of gender bias in environmental remediation initiatives and gender related conflicts.

Research Questions

i. What is the effects of historical grievances on community trust and perceptions of environmental remediation projects?
ii. How does execution delays impact community dissatisfaction and conflict escalation?
iii. How does the exclusion of local communities from policy-making processes contribute to communal resistance?
iv. To what extent does the relationship between low quality remediation projects influence youth restiveness?
v. How does the effects of gender bias in environmental remediation initiatives impacts gender related conflicts.

Significance of the Study

Policy-makers: this research offers evidence-based insights into why remediation projects have failed to curb unrest and how governance structures can be reformed to foster inclusion and transparency. The findings will provide a roadmap for crafting policies that do not merely focus on technical cleanup but integrate social reconciliation, community engagement, and sustainable development into remediation strategies.

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Non-governmental organizations (NGOs): particularly those advocating for environmental justice and community rights, this study provides a framework for intervention. It will equip civil society groups with data-driven arguments to push for fair compensation, inclusive decision-making, and policies that prioritize the voices of the Niger Delta people.

Academic community: this research fills a crucial gap in existing literature on environmental governance, conflict resolution, and sustainable development. It contributes to broader discussions on the socio-political dimensions of ecological restoration, offering a theoretical foundation for future research on post-extraction economies and community resilience.

General public: particularly those residing in the Niger Delta, this study amplifies their long-standing concerns. By documenting their experiences, grievances, and aspirations, it provides a platform for their voices to be heard in policy discussions and corporate boardrooms where decisions about their land and future are made.

Research community: this study opens up new areas of inquiry into how environmental degradation, corporate responsibility, and social justice intersect. It challenges scholars and practitioners to rethink conventional approaches to remediation, advocating for a holistic, justice-driven model that prioritizes both environmental and human recovery.

Ultimately, this study is not just about environmental remediation, it is about peace, justice, and the long-overdue restoration of trust between the government, oil companies, and the people of the Niger Delta.

Scope of the Study

Content: This study focuses on environmental remediation projects and their role in fueling communal conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It explores the socio-political and economic dimensions of remediation efforts, with particular attention to how historical grievances, project inefficiencies, lack of community engagement, and gender disparities contribute to tensions between stakeholders. The study examines how project implementation delays, exclusion from decision-making processes, and failure to integrate economic and infrastructural benefits exacerbate mistrust and dissatisfaction within affected communities.

Unit of Analysis: The research adopt a cross-sectional research design approach, drawing from case studies, stakeholder interviews, and policy reviews to assess how environmental remediation projects either mitigate or escalate conflicts in host communities. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of local governance, corporate accountability, and stakeholder engagement in ensuring successful project execution. In furtherance, the study critically examines the socio-economic impact of these projects, particularly regarding job creation, infrastructure development, and gender inclusion.

Geographically: the study cover key oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta, such as Ogoni, Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme land, where past and ongoing remediation projects have sparked controversy. The study period span the last two decades to provide a comprehensive historical analysis of how remediation initiatives have influenced communal stability. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to policy recommendations that promote sustainable, inclusive, and conflict-free remediation efforts in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE		DEPENDENT VARIABLES
Neglect of historical grievances on community trust	→	Perceptions of environmental remediation projects.
Project execution delays	→	Community dissatisfaction
Exclusion of local communities from policy making processes	→	Communal resistance

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Low quality remediation projects	→	Youth restiveness
Gender bias in environmental remediation initiatives	→	Gender related conflicts

Table 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher 2025

This figure above provides a simplified conceptual framework demonstrating the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This study deconstructs the topic Environmental Remediation Projects and Communal Conflicts in the Niger Delta by breaking it into its fundamental variables: the dependent variable (communal conflicts) and the independent variable (environmental remediation projects). Within these categories, specific indicators are explored to understand their individual and interconnected roles in shaping the conflict dynamics of the region.

The independent variable which is environmental remediation projects refers to the organized efforts undertaken by governmental bodies, international agencies, oil companies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to clean up environmental pollution caused by oil exploration activities. These projects encompass soil and water decontamination, reforestation efforts, waste management, and compensation programs for affected communities. However, these initiatives have often been mired in controversy, with communities frequently questioning their transparency, efficiency, and impact. Under the independent variable, delays in execution and substandard remediation work, inadequate efforts to foster mutual trust, exclusion of local voices in governance and policy-making, failure to integrate infrastructure development and employment opportunities, gender disparities in project participation and benefits, and poor resource control and lack of dialogue, will be the indicators to guide the study.

Also, the dependent variable (communal conflicts) shows how the failures of environmental projects have contributed to a cycle of communal conflicts in the Niger Delta. When communities perceive these efforts as inadequate, exclusionary, or insincere, tensions escalate, often leading to violent resistance, sabotage of oil infrastructure, and inter-community disputes. The emergence of militant groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers and other resistance movements underscores the severity of these conflicts (Ukiwo, 2021). Many of these groups emerged in response to environmental injustices and the failure of both the government and oil companies to address the concerns of local populations.

The relationship between environmental remediation projects (independent variable) and communal conflicts (dependent variable) is deeply intertwined. The shortcomings of remediation efforts which is evident in delays, lack of trust-building, exclusion from decision-making, economic neglect, gender bias, and poor dialogue; serve as catalysts for communal unrest. These factors erode trust, fuel grievances, and create an environment where conflict thrives.

Neglect of Historical Grievances

The unresolved injustices of the past ranging from unfulfilled compensation claims to the displacement of indigenous populations continue to fuel discontent and resistance. Without a sincere effort to recognize and rectify these historical wrongs, remediation projects risk being perceived as mere symbolic gestures rather than genuine attempts at environmental and social restoration.

Neglecting these historical grievances perpetuates distrust, weakens community engagement in remediation efforts, and intensifies communal conflicts. To fully understand this issue, the following sub-areas require further exploration:

i. Unresolved Oil Spill Compensation Claims
ii. Lack of Acknowledgment of Past Environmental Damage
iii. Failure to Prosecute Perpetrators of Environmental Injustice

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iv. Absence of Restorative Justice Mechanisms

v. Neglect of Indigenous Land Rights and Displacements

Unresolved Oil Spill Compensation Claims

Communities that host oil pipelines and other industrial infrastructure have extensively documented the effects of oil spills on their environment and sources of livelihood. The issue is critical; according to data from the Nigerian National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), approximately 37,000 barrels, equivalent to about 5.8 million liters, of crude oil were discharged into the environment in Nigeria in 2019 (NOSDRA, 2019). This figure represents a substantial volume by any measure and is likely to be an underestimate of the actual amount of oil spilled (NOSDRA, 2019).

When an oil spill occurs, the standard procedure mandates the removal of the spilled crude and the restoration of the natural environment to its original state through a process known as clean-up and remediation. Those affected by the pollution. such as farmers whose lands have been contaminated, making it impossible for crops to grow should, in principle, be entitled to financial compensation for their losses.

Nigerian legislation provides for such compensatory mechanisms through various legal and regulatory frameworks. Additionally, there are several impact assessment and claims procedures that are expected to be followed whenever a spill is officially recorded. Collectively, these processes form what is referred to as the oil spill compensation system.

Despite these provisions, the compensation framework is overly complex, sluggish, and often fails to resolve claims satisfactorily, if at all. In essence, it does not function effectively. This is particularly troubling because researchers have extensively documented decades of environmental degradation and adverse health consequences in the Niger Delta without adequate remediation.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), which oversees all oil exploration and production in the country, has expressed its commitment to significantly expanding the sector. The company aims to increase oil output by one-third, targeting a production capacity of three million barrels per day by 2023 (NNPC, 2021). This planned expansion suggests that the risk of further environmental harm remains high.

Therefore, in addition to implementing more stringent measures to prevent oil spills from occurring in the first place, it is crucial to reform the compensation framework to ensure it functions more efficiently. Through interviews conducted with more than 30 stakeholders directly engaged in the oil spill compensation process, this report identifies key obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of the existing compensation system.

Some communities in the region remain distrustful of outsiders due to past experiences, leading to resistance or hesitation in allowing assessment teams to conduct their work. The Niger Delta has a history of conflict and violence, further intensifying these challenges. Various local groups, such as ‘area boys’, a term used to describe loosely organized youth groups may demand a portion of the compensation funds, adding another layer of complexity to an already difficult process.

Nigeria is one of the most insecure countries globally, facing a wide range of security challenges across different regions. These include terrorism perpetrated by non-state armed factions such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the northeastern part of the country; organized street gangs operating in the southwestern states; separatist movements in the southeast advocating for Biafran independence; violent conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in the northwest and Middle Belt; oil militancy in the Niger Delta; and maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

The economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these security issues, leading to an upsurge in armed criminal groups. In local discourse, these groups are often referred to as "armed bandits," and they have been responsible for widespread violence, including kidnappings, looting, and cattle theft, particularly in the northwest and increasingly in the north-central regions.

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Plate 2.1: Vandalized pipeline in the Niger Delta

Source: www.litcaf.com

As of 2019, more than 8,000 people primarily in Zamfara State had lost their lives due to banditry, with over 200,000 individuals internally displaced and approximately 60,000 fleeing to neighboring Niger Republic (Ngwube, 2024).

The impact of these armed groups has been particularly devastating, as they have caused more fatalities than Boko Haram, kidnappers, robbers, and cultists combined, accounting for 47.5% of the recorded killings in 2019 (Ngwube, 2024). This alarming trend has been linked to the Nigerian State's inability to ensure peace and security for its citizens.

Given this reality, scholars such as Campbell and Rotberg have classified Nigeria as a failed state, drawing parallels between Nigeria and other fragile nations like Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, and Somalia (Ngwube, 2024). Campbell further argues that Nigeria does not function as a cohesive state or nation due to its deep-seated internal contradictions, including ethnic and religious divisions, as well as vast "ungoverned spaces" where the government exerts little to no authority, thereby exacerbating instability and lawlessness (Mbachu, 2022).

Within the context of banditry in the northwest, the concept of "ungoverned spaces" has been used to explain the persistence and expansion of these criminal networks. This theory suggests that banditry thrives because the Nigerian government has failed to maintain control over forests, remote settlements, and rural regions, which have become safe havens for criminal gangs (Mbachu, 2022).

To combat this crisis, proponents of the "ungoverned spaces" thesis advocate for a state-led effort to reassert authority over these lawless areas. Ojo and Asinwa (2022) argues that the establishment of effective state institutions in remote environments, coupled with empowering vulnerable rural populations who currently rely on informal governance structures, is essential for ensuring human security.

Similarly, Ayegbusi (2021) stress the necessity of enforcing governmental control over forests and expelling illegal occupants who use these spaces for criminal activities. These perspectives emphasize a predominantly military approach to addressing the issue of banditry.

While it is evident that weak state capacity has contributed to the proliferation of banditry in northern Nigeria, and that a military strategy is necessary to combat crime, the socioeconomic conditions in which these armed groups operate have received limited academic scrutiny. A more comprehensive understanding of the banditry crisis would require examining the broader socioeconomic factors that drive individuals into criminality. This perspective suggests that beyond military intervention, sustainable solutions must include targeted economic and social policies aimed at addressing the root causes of banditry in the northwest geopolitical zone.

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Lack of Acknowledgment of Past Environmental Damage

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been a hotspot of environmental degradation for decades, primarily due to extensive oil exploration and extraction activities. However, one of the most critical issues in addressing this ecological devastation is the consistent lack of acknowledgment of past environmental damage by both multinational oil corporations and successive Nigerian governments. This failure to recognize historical environmental harm has had far-reaching implications for local communities, economic stability, and ecological sustainability.

Despite extensive documentation of oil spills, gas flaring, deforestation, and biodiversity loss in the region, the lack of accountability and recognition has perpetuated ongoing environmental crises, social unrest, and economic hardship.

Plate 2.2: Official of inspecting oil spill sites in the Niger Delta

Source: edition.cnn.com

For over three decades, environmental concerns have been a critical issue among global leaders, particularly in industrialized nations of the Western world. Arora (2024) noted that by the late 1980s, environmental issues had become a major global concern, largely due to scientific findings that questioned the stability of the earth's climate and its ability to sustain human life.

Two primary factors have been identified as major contributors to climate change. The first is the continuous depletion of the ozone layer, largely caused by rising emissions of greenhouse gases. These gases, primarily composed of carbon emissions from motor vehicles and industrial plants, have played a significant role in altering climatic conditions. The second factor is the rapid decline in biodiversity and forest reserves due to deforestation. The loss of forests, which serve as vital carbon sinks, exacerbates the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, further amplifying global warming.

In response to these alarming environmental threats, governments have turned to regulatory enforcement as a means of mitigating the causes of regional and global environmental degradation. The primary motivation behind international environmental conferences such as the Stockholm Conference of 1972 and the Rio de Janeiro Conference of 1992 was to establish legal frameworks aimed at ensuring compliance with environmental protection measures.

One of the most effective mechanisms that governments can employ to mitigate the harmful effects of multinational corporations on the environment and the livelihoods of host communities is the enforcement of environmental regulations and standards. Without a strong culture of environmental compliance, particularly one that holds large corporations accountable, the quality of the environment will inevitably deteriorate.

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This concern arises from the fact that the fundamental objective of businesses is profit maximization while minimizing losses. However, both government and private sector actors often hold the misconception that improved environmental standards could negatively impact a country's economic competitiveness. This position, which has been strongly refuted by Lawrence and Caroline (2020), suggests that businesses may attempt to reduce costs by externalizing the environmental damage caused by their operations.

Such negative externalities have severe consequences for communities whose survival depends on the environment, as seen in the case of the Niger Delta. The widespread degradation of the region due to oil exploration activities has highlighted the urgent need for a more effective environmental enforcement strategy.

On a global scale, there is growing recognition of the significant role environmental enforcement plays in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which are major contributors to climate change and global warming. This realization has led to the convening of numerous international summits and conferences aimed at addressing the adverse impact of multinational corporations on the environment.

As previously stated, the primary focus of these global discussions has been on ensuring compliance with environmental agreements. However, in developing countries like Nigeria, enforcing environmental standards remains an arduous challenge. The country faces numerous environmental issues, including deforestation, biodiversity loss, desertification, flooding, erosion, air and water pollution, industrial waste, and inadequate waste management.

The urgency of effectively implementing environmental regulations cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, as Benebo (2018) observed, the rate of non-compliance with environmental laws remains alarmingly high, compounded by outdated legislation that requires urgent revision.

In the oil-rich Niger Delta, the environmental consequences of multinational oil corporations have been catastrophic, severely affecting the economic foundations and livelihoods of the local population. This has led to widespread poverty and increased social unrest in the region. Oil spills, for instance, have been a persistent issue, causing extensive damage to the Niger Delta's environment.

Plate 2.3: Environmental damage done by SPDC in Ogoni land

Source: www.behindthelogos.org

Umar (2021) reported that between 1976 and 2009, an estimated 9,191,426 barrels of crude oil were spilled into the region, with at least 55% contaminating rivers, creeks, and shorelines, while 45% affected farmlands, residential areas, roads, and drinking water sources. Many of these spills result from the rupture of aging pipelines, some of which have been in operation for over four decades without replacement, despite being

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subjected to high-pressure crude oil transportation on a daily basis. In 2009, Shell admitted that its pipelines in the Niger Delta were highly susceptible to rupture due to corrosion and prolonged use (Umar, 2021).

Gas flaring is another major environmental and economic concern in Nigeria. Apart from the country losing billions of dollars due to this unsustainable practice, various studies have documented its harmful effects on human health and its correlation with social unrest, reduced agricultural productivity, and environmental degradation (Adeleye et al., 2021).

According to reports by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank (2019), Nigeria flares over 70 million cubic meters of gas daily, releasing approximately 70 million tons of carbon dioxide into the Niger Delta's atmosphere every day. As a result, the greenhouse gas emissions produced by oil companies operating in Nigeria surpass the combined emissions from all other sources in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Niger Delta was once home to extensive mangrove forests and rich biodiversity. However, years of oil exploration, dredging, and pollution have led to the destruction of these vital ecosystems. Mangrove forests, which act as natural buffers against coastal erosion and provide breeding grounds for fish, have been significantly reduced due to oil spills and land degradation. According to Nwilo and Badejo (2016), more than 60% of the Niger Delta's mangroves have been lost due to oil pollution and deforestation. This has had devastating effects on local fishing communities, as fish populations have dwindled, leading to food shortages and economic decline.

The failure to acknowledge past environmental damage has not only led to ecological devastation but has also fueled social unrest and economic hardship in the Niger Delta.

Failure to Prosecute Perpetrators of Environmental Injustice

The failure to hold perpetrators of environmental injustice accountable remains a significant challenge in regions like the Niger Delta, where oil extraction has led to widespread ecological destruction. Despite numerous documented cases of oil spills, gas flaring, and land degradation, legal actions against multinational corporations and government agencies responsible for these violations have been largely ineffective. Weak enforcement mechanisms, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and corporate influence over regulatory bodies have allowed environmental offenders to operate with impunity, leaving local communities to suffer the consequences of pollution and resource depletion.

In the Ogoni land context, in July 2005, under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Nigerian government made efforts to address the long-standing environmental grievances in Ogoni land by appointing Reverend Father Mathew Hassan Kukah as a mediator between the Ogoni people and Shell. This initiative was ostensibly aimed at demonstrating the government's commitment to the rule of law and the protection of human rights, particularly in regions affected by oil-related environmental devastation (Ojieh, 2021).

As part of this effort, an agency consisting of international experts was established to assess the environmental damage and oversee the remediation of oil-polluted sites across Ogoni land. However, while these measures appeared to be steps toward environmental justice, the absence of legal actions against those responsible for decades of pollution underscores a continued failure to hold perpetrators accountable.

A significant milestone in this process was the commissioning of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) by the Nigerian government in July 2006 to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the extent of environmental degradation in Ogoni land (Desai, 2022). The mandate included an assessment of contamination levels, the impact of pollution on public health, and recommendations for proper remediation strategies.

The resulting UNEP report, published in 2011, presented a grim reality of massive oil contamination affecting

nearly every aspect of the environment, from air quality to groundwater, surface water, soil, sediments, and vegetation. The report by a scholar (Agbonifo, 2016) confirmed that despite the cessation of oil exploration in Ogoni land since 1993, oil spills remained a persistent issue, exacerbated by inadequate cleanup efforts. This

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ongoing pollution, facilitated by regulatory failures and the absence of punitive action against responsible corporations, highlights systemic environmental injustice.

One of the most alarming revelations in the UNEP report was the government's failure to enforce timely cleanup operations after oil spills. The report noted that delays in remediation efforts allowed crude oil to spread unchecked, contaminating farmlands, polluting creeks, and further degrading the ecosystem, particularly during heavy rainfall.

The lack of urgency in addressing these spills reflects a broader issue of negligence, where neither the oil companies nor government agencies are held to account for their roles in environmental degradation. This lack of prosecution fosters a culture of impunity, where corporations continue harmful practices without fear of legal consequences, leaving communities to bear the brunt of environmental damage.

Although the cleanup of Ogoni land has officially commenced, skepticism remains regarding the effectiveness and transparency of the process. The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), the agency responsible for overseeing the cleanup, has faced criticisms regarding its efficiency, accountability, and adherence to best environmental practices. The uncertainty surrounding HYPREP's operations further reflects the failure of authorities to enforce strict environmental standards or to sanction those responsible for decades of pollution. Without legal accountability and firm punitive measures against the perpetrators of environmental injustice, remediation efforts risk being superficial, offering little long-term relief to the affected communities (Desai, 2022).

The case of Ogoni land serves as a glaring example of the failure to prosecute those responsible for environmental crimes. While government initiatives and international interventions have acknowledged the devastation caused by oil pollution, the absence of meaningful legal action against polluting corporations suggests that economic interests continue to take precedence over environmental justice. Until those responsible for environmental harm are held accountable through strict enforcement of laws and judicial interventions, communities like Ogoni land will continue to suffer the consequences of unchecked corporate misconduct and regulatory failure.

Absence of Restorative Justice Mechanisms

Restorative justice is a crucial component of addressing environmental harm, as it ensures that affected communities receive not only compensation but also rehabilitation of their environment. However, in regions like the Niger Delta, there is a glaring absence of restorative justice mechanisms to hold polluters accountable and to provide meaningful reparations for the damages inflicted (White, 2022). The lack of structured frameworks for environmental restoration leaves devastated communities without the necessary support to rebuild their lives and ecosystems.

Despite the extensive pollution caused by oil spills, gas flaring, and industrial waste, efforts to restore affected lands and waterways have been largely ineffective or non-existent. Many oil companies continue their operations without fulfilling their obligations to remediate contaminated sites (White, 2022). Without legally enforced restorative mechanisms, these corporations evade responsibility, leaving local populations to cope with health crises, loss of livelihoods, and deteriorating living conditions.

Western legal traditions predominantly focus on determining individual culpability and enforcing punitive measures, often through financial sanctions or imprisonment. In practice, this approach places minimal emphasis on the process of healing, truth-telling, or the reintegration of offenders into society. Consequently, restorative justice theorists advocate for a justice system that aims to achieve a "positive peace"—one that fosters legitimacy and sustainability, rather than a "negative peace," which merely seeks the cessation of overt violence without addressing underlying grievances (White, 2022).

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This perspective aligns with African traditional justice systems, which typically adopt a more inclusive and communal approach, emphasizing dialogue and consensus-building among families and community members involved in conflicts (Omale, 2022).

However, while these indigenous mechanisms provide valuable alternatives to purely punitive models, it is crucial to avoid idealizing them. The role of religious figures, elders, and culturally significant reconciliation rituals plays a vital role in African justice systems, often involving symbolic acts such as animal sacrifices to cleanse the spiritual remnants of conflict. These culturally embedded practices highlight the necessity of integrating local perspectives into justice frameworks, ensuring that they complement rather than conflict with Western legal traditions.

Justice mechanisms in rural communities often rely on traditional systems rooted in oral traditions, commonly referred to as "living customary law." This form of justice is characterized by its adaptability, as it evolves based on specific cases and changing social norms. Unlike rigid legal codes, living customary law allows for flexible resolutions that reflect the realities of rural societies. However, written customary law, which emerged during colonial rule as an effort to formalise traditional legal practices, has been criticized for limiting this flexibility and preventing the law from naturally evolving over time (UNDP, 2016). Despite concerns over its rigidity, written customary law in postcolonial societies offers a degree of predictability, providing a clearer framework for legal expectations while still allowing some level of adaptability. Justice mechanisms in rural areas often function independently of state control, though in some countries, they are officially recognized as part of the legal system. In such cases, decisions made through these traditional systems may carry legal weight, but in other instances, they function more like mediation processes, where disputing parties can accept or reject the proposed settlement (International Commission of Jurists, 2019).

While many rural justice mechanisms primarily handle civil disputes and family matters, there are instances where they extend to serious offences, including violent crimes such as murder. In countries where traditional justice systems are legally acknowledged, their authority is often limited in terms of the types of cases they can handle and the individuals they can prosecute. However, in some rural communities, traditional courts continue to exercise jurisdiction over significant criminal matters, reflecting the ongoing reliance on customary justice as a primary means of conflict resolution (Markus, 2024).

In many African countries, traditional justice systems are legally recognized and integrated into national legal frameworks, reflecting the enduring significance of customary law in governance and dispute resolution. In South Africa, for instance, the Constitution acknowledges the "institution, status, and role of traditional leadership, according to customary law… subject to the Constitution". This recognition is further reinforced by the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act No. 41 of 2003, which legitimizes traditional communities with established leadership structures. However, indigenous groups without formally recognized leadership systems, such as the *Khoi-San*, are not included under this framework. The 2003 White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance also does not specifically address indigenous governance structures, except for a provision in the Constitution that promotes *Khoi*, *Nama*, and *San* languages through the Pan South African Language Board (Government of South Africa, 2013).

Similarly, Namibia's Constitution (Article 66(1) acknowledges traditional authorities and customary law as part of its legal system. Despite this, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples has distinguished the *San* and *Himba* people from traditional communities, identifying them as indigenous groups with unique governance and justice systems. Namibia has a well-structured system of traditional justice mechanisms, with 49 officially recognized traditional authorities, each with distinct governance and dispute resolution practices. However, several unrecognized traditional communities also operate under their own customary laws, highlighting the complexities of classifying justice mechanisms within a single national framework (United Nations, 2019).

Although traditional justice systems across Africa have been widely studied, there is a notable gap in research on indigenous justice systems, particularly in comparison to regions such as the Americas and the Asia-Pacific. Unlike religious courts, such as Islamic Sharia courts, which derive authority from sacred texts, traditional justice

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systems vary significantly in their foundations. Some are influenced by spiritual or religious values, while others operate independently of any religious doctrine. This diversity makes broad classifications difficult, even within individual countries. For example, Uganda has numerous ethnic groups, each with a distinct justice system, while Ethiopia has 62 tribal groups with at least seven distinct ethnic communities that primarily rely on their own customary justice systems, even for criminal cases (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2021).

Restorative justice has become a widely discussed topic in modern criminology, yet there is limited research on how community involvement in this approach is put into practice. While many supporters emphasize the community as a key element of restorative justice, there is little clarity on why this is important and how it functions in real-life cases. This study provides both theoretical and empirical insights into the meaning of "community involvement" in restorative justice and its practical role in conflict resolution. By examining a case study and drawing from broader sociological perspectives, her (Rosenblatt, 2015) work explores how community members engage in restorative justice initiatives and what lessons can be learned from the English and Welsh experiences. It argues that for restorative justice programs to be effective, they must adopt a more concrete and modern understanding of community. This involves recognizing the significance of geographical location, family ties, friendships, and shared social identities in shaping community participation.

Restorative justice is based on a unique set of values and assumptions that set it apart from traditional criminal justice. One of its core principles is that crime should be addressed holistically, involving not only the offender but also the victim and the wider community. Unlike conventional justice systems that view crime primarily as a violation of legal codes, restorative justice sees it as harm inflicted on individuals and the community (Braithwaite, 1989; Crawford & Newburn, 2013; Johnstone, 2021). The approach is rooted in the idea that crime results from broken social bonds, similar to Hirschi's (1969) social-bond theory, and that true justice requires repairing these relationships to enable both victim restitution and offender reintegration. Instead of relying solely on the formal criminal justice system, restorative justice emphasizes the role of the community in addressing crime, aligning with research that highlights the effectiveness of informal social control mechanisms over formal ones.

A significant distinction between restorative and traditional justice lies in their approach to offender accountability. In many criminal justice systems, including that of the United States, accountability is often limited to sentencing outcomes. Offenders may plead guilty sometimes to lesser charges or be convicted at trial, but they are rarely required to actively take responsibility for their actions. Restorative justice, on the other hand, demands that offenders acknowledge their wrongdoing and make amends, either through monetary restitution or symbolic gestures of repair (Bazemore & Schiff, 2015). This approach argues that true accountability can only be achieved through meaningful interaction between offenders and victims, where harm is addressed directly.

Another key difference between the two approaches is their stance on punishment. Classical deterrence theory suggests that swift and certain punishment can prevent crime and rehabilitate offenders. However, research shows that deterrence-based methods have largely failed to reduce reoffending, with correctional systems often experiencing recidivism rates above 70% within three years of release (Lipsey & Cullen, 2017).

Restorative justice challenges the effectiveness of punitive measures, arguing that they disrupt social relationships and fail to rehabilitate offenders. Instead of prioritizing retribution, restorative justice focuses on victim healing, offender rehabilitation, and strengthening community relationships through reconciliation and skill development.

Additionally, restorative and criminal justice differ in their temporal focus when responding to crime. Traditional justice systems often emphasize punishment for past offenses, while restorative justice looks forward, seeking solutions that restore relationships and prevent future harm. This fundamental shift in perspective highlights restorative justice's goal of long-term community stability and reintegration rather than short-term punitive responses.

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The variations in governance structures and legal recognition across Africa reflect the diverse political and historical contexts that shape traditional justice systems. Despite their differences, these systems continue to play a crucial role in conflict resolution and governance, particularly in rural areas where state judicial institutions may be less accessible. However, the legal status, structure, and jurisdiction of traditional justice mechanisms remain subjects of debate, requiring further study to fully understand their role within modern legal systems.

Understanding justice in African societies requires an exploration of the complex interplay between indigenous values, communal relationships, and external judicial frameworks. The principles and mechanisms of restorative justice find strong resonance in African communal traditions, where reconciliation and compensation take precedence over retribution. However, despite the rich heritage of dispute resolution in African societies, there remains a significant absence of structured restorative justice mechanisms within formal legal systems.

Plate 2.4: Group of protesters demanding justice from SPDC

Source: www.thenationonlineng.net

The failure to institutionalize these culturally relevant practices has led to a justice deficit, particularly in addressing historical and environmental injustices. This absence leaves many communities, especially those affected by corporate environmental destruction, without effective means to seek redress or repair. The intersection of Western legal norms and African justice traditions presents an opportunity for mutual learning, where Africa's long-standing culture of collectivism and conflict resolution could inform and enhance global restorative justice approaches.

In furtherance, the broader discourse on justice mechanisms in Africa must also take into account the contentious role of international judicial bodies, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC). While institutions like the ICC were established to combat impunity and enforce global justice norms, they have been met with skepticism in Africa. Critics (Markus, 2024) argue that such institutions pose a challenge to national sovereignty, undermine local restorative traditions, and disproportionately target weaker states while being selective in their prosecutions.

Despite the fact that a majority of African nations are signatories to the Rome Statute, and that several cases brought before the ICC were self-referred by African states, resistance persists due to perceptions of bias and neocolonial legal overreach. This skepticism, however, should not be mistaken for outright opposition to justice but rather as an acknowledgment of the risks posed by externally imposed judicial mechanisms that fail to account for African concerns. A justice system that disregards indigenous perspectives and the need for reconciliation risks exacerbating divisions rather than fostering lasting peace and accountability (Markus, 2024).

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Ultimately, the absence of well-defined restorative justice structures in Africa has left many communities vulnerable, particularly in cases of environmental degradation and corporate negligence.

While international justice initiatives can serve an essential role in addressing large-scale crimes, their effectiveness is often compromised by their failure to integrate indigenous justice principles. Moving forward, there must be a concerted effort to bridge the gap between Western and African legal traditions, ensuring that justice mechanisms are both locally relevant and globally recognized. Without such integration, the pursuit of justice will remain incomplete, and affected communities will continue to suffer the consequences of unresolved historical and environmental injustices.

Neglect of Indigenous Land Rights and Displacements

Nearly every component of the oil spill compensation framework is regulated by ambiguous or conflicting directives. This complexity arises due to the absence of a comprehensive legal framework specifically designed to address environmental challenges related to oil exploration and production. Instead, these issues are dealt with separately from other environmental concerns within Nigeria's legal system, resulting in a fragmented approach to regulation.

One particularly notorious issue stemming from this legislative gap is the frequent dependence on the Land Use Act to determine land valuation for compensation purposes. This piece of legislation, which was enacted over four decades ago, was originally intended to govern land acquisitions made through compulsory purchase by the government. Given its outdated nature and the fact that it was not designed to address environmental damage from oil spills, its application in such cases is fundamentally inappropriate and ineffective (Land Use Act, 1978).

Nigeria's land policies have a rich and extensive history, encompassing various systems such as the traditional land tenure system, statutory land laws applicable to the Southern and Northern Protectorates, and the Land and Native Rights Proclamation of 1910. However, these earlier policies were unable to adequately address the increasing demands of land administration and ownership.

In response to these challenges, the Nigerian government introduced a new legislative framework on March 29, 1978, known as the Land Use Act (LUA). This legislation superseded multiple state-level land laws that previously governed land tenure arrangements across the country. The primary objective of the LUA was to establish a uniform land policy throughout Nigeria and curb speculative land transactions.

The Act was designed to safeguard the rights of all Nigerians to access and utilize land, ensuring that individuals could benefit from land resources, including agricultural produce, to sustain themselves and their families. Despite these well-intended objectives, the LUA still possesses notable deficiencies, which will be examined in this discussion (Land Use Act, 1978).

Land policy in Nigeria is deeply intertwined with governmental needs and national development strategies. The production of housing for civil servants, the expansion of urban settlements into rural territories, and the ability to utilize land resources without providing adequate compensation have all been influenced by land-related legislation. Before the enactment of the LUA, previous land policies were mostly applicable to specific regions, predominantly in the northern and southern parts of the country.

Historically, in ancient civilizations, land was not individually owned; instead, it was collectively held by extended families, communities, or villages. The community chief was responsible for allocating land on a freehold basis. However, individual land ownership was introduced during the colonial era, particularly in Lagos, leading to the emergence of two distinct tenure systems: individual and communal land ownership.

The LUA abolished individual land ownership and transferred authority over land to state governors, thereby replacing traditional custodians such as chiefs, family heads, and emirs (Ezejiofor and Okolocha, 2015).

Land has historically been central to the identity, economy, and cultural survival of indigenous communities in Nigeria. Indigenous land tenure systems were established to ensure equitable distribution and collective access

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to land, recognizing it as more than a mere economic asset but as a fundamental element of social, political, and spiritual life (Oba, 2023). Land ownership was predominantly communal, with families and entire communities managing land collectively under customary law. While individuals had user rights, outright ownership was rare, as land was considered a shared heritage meant to serve both present and future generations.

The administration of communal land was entrusted to traditional leaders such as community or family heads, who allocated portions of land to members based on need. However, these allocations conferred only usufructuary rights rather than absolute ownership, meaning the land could be used and even passed down to heirs but could not be sold or permanently transferred outside the community (Amanor, 2020). This communal approach ensured that land remained within the lineage and continued to provide for the well-being of the community as a whole. A significant limitation of indigenous land rights was the exclusion of women from land ownership. In many indigenous societies, particularly among the Igbo, women were restricted from inheriting or being allocated land, reinforcing patriarchal structures that limited their economic independence (Ekechi, 2015). Despite these restrictions, men who were granted land rights could engage in economic activities, such as pledging the land as collateral for loans or creating customary tenancy agreements, commonly known as kola tenancy, which enabled non-indigenous individuals to access land for agricultural purposes (Olomola, 2018).

The indigenous land tenure system remains a crucial aspect of Nigeria's legal and cultural framework, though it has faced challenges due to modernization and statutory land reforms. While customary land rights offer security and social cohesion, they often lack formal legal recognition, leading to conflicts between traditional and statutory land ownership frameworks (Adewumi & Oludayo, 2019). The evolving debate on indigenous land rights highlights the need for policies that balance cultural traditions with contemporary legal structures to ensure fair access to land for all community members. Theoretically, this shift was intended to facilitate land acquisition by the government for urban development, reduce the role of ethnicity in land ownership especially in urban centers where indigenous groups previously dominated land control and enable non-indigenous people to gain access to land. The Act aimed to mitigate land speculation by restricting the extent of land ownership by indigenous communities. To implement this, the LUA provided for the establishment of Land Allocation Committees responsible for distributing land through the issuance of Certificates of Occupancy. In principle, the LUA sought to dismantle large landholdings, promote property transfers for housing development, and rejuvenate indigenous settlements within prime commercial areas of urban centers. However, in reality, these objectives were largely unfulfilled.

Traditional leaders and community authorities continue to exert significant control over land, often refusing to relinquish it. Furthermore, the LUA has failed to curb speculative land acquisitions or land hoarding. While the LUA appears to present a sound policy framework on paper, scholars such as Ezejiofor and Okolocha (2015) argue that the system has been manipulated by influential individuals, the government has shown little commitment to its enforcement, and the overall implementation of the Act has deviated from its intended principles.

The neglect of historical grievances in the Niger Delta, particularly in the context of environmental remediation projects, has significantly eroded community confidence in both the government and oil corporations. The absence of genuine accountability for past injustices, coupled with slow and often ineffective cleanup efforts, reinforces distrust and fuels resentment among the affected populations. Without meaningful engagement, adequate compensation, and acknowledgment of historical harm, these projects are seen as mere public relations exercises rather than sincere attempts at restoration. As a result, many Niger Delta communities remain skeptical of remediation initiatives, viewing them as yet another instance of exploitation rather than a pathway to justice and sustainable development.

Delays in execution and substandard remediation work

The remediation of oil-polluted environments in the Niger Delta has been marred by prolonged delays and substandard execution, leaving affected communities in a state of frustration and despair. While remediation projects are often announced with much political and corporate fanfare, the reality on the ground tells a different story many projects either stagnate or fail to meet internationally accepted environmental restoration standards.

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Communities that have suffered environmental degradation for decades remain exposed to health hazards, loss of livelihoods, and deteriorating living conditions due to the inefficiency of cleanup operations.

The dissatisfaction is further compounded by reports of subpar remediation efforts that fail to restore contaminated sites to their pre-pollution conditions. Studies, such as those conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2011, have highlighted that many cleanup efforts in Ogoniland and other parts of the Niger Delta were poorly executed, with lingering contamination in water bodies and farmlands (UNEP, 2011). More than a decade later, similar findings continue to emerge, suggesting that neither the government nor oil companies have adequately addressed the fundamental issues undermining effective remediation.

Delays in execution and substandard remediation work have become critical issues in the oil and gas sector, as evidenced by a series of studies conducted by Ernst & Young in their “Spotlight on Oil and Gas Megaprojects” reports. Their findings indicate that approximately 78% of projects experience budget overruns, while 65% suffer from significant delays (Ernst & Young, n.d.). These inefficiencies are particularly problematic in an industry where timely project completion is essential to maintaining the stability of the energy supply chain (Ekhator, 2019).

The persistent issues of cost escalations and extended timelines have been analyzed in project management literature, with Kerzner (2019) highlighting the necessity of improved control over corporate resources as a potential remedy. The failure to address these inefficiencies has resulted in severe consequences for remediation efforts, as prolonged execution timelines often exacerbate environmental degradation while failing to restore damaged ecosystems effectively.

The challenges associated with project execution in this sector underscore the importance of employing contemporary project management methodologies. Initially confined to the U.S. Department of Defense and its affiliated contractors, project management has since evolved into a discipline applied across various industries, including construction, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, finance, and even international organizations such as the United Nations (Ekhator, 2019).

Despite these advancements, many remediation projects in the oil and gas sector continue to suffer from suboptimal execution, with project delays leading to incomplete or inadequate environmental restoration efforts. The mismanagement of resources and failure to meet established timelines ultimately undermine the effectiveness of remediation programs, leaving affected communities vulnerable to prolonged exposure to environmental hazards.

A crucial aspect of mitigating these challenges lies in enhancing project planning and execution, particularly by prioritizing education and access to critical project management knowledge. According to the Project Management Institute (PMI), effective project execution is governed by three fundamental constraints, often referred to as the "triple constraint," the "golden triangle," or the "project management triangle" (Ekhator, 2019).

The persistent link between oil and conflict has been widely acknowledged in both qualitative and quantitative research, with a strong scholarly consensus on its significance. However, beyond the well-documented connection between petroleum and violence, one of the most pressing issues in oil-rich regions such as the Niger Delta is the prevalence of substandard infrastructural projects and environmental degradation caused by oil extraction activities. Despite the vast wealth generated from petroleum resources, many oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta suffer from poorly executed development projects, including inadequate road networks, subpar housing, and failing public utilities, which exacerbate social unrest and deepen economic disparities.

Scholars such as Klador et al. (2017) have examined the extent to which oil influences conflict dynamics and whether the presence of petroleum alters the nature of disputes in resource-rich regions. However, in the case of the Niger Delta, the crisis extends beyond conflict to include a long history of exploitative practices by oil companies and government agencies, leading to poorly constructed infrastructure that fails to meet community

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needs. The term "resource war," as coined by Klare, aptly captures the struggle of communities that, despite sitting atop vast reserves of crude oil, remain deprived of quality social amenities. Klare (2016: xiii) asserts that petroleum has an unparalleled capacity to ignite crises, a reality reflected not only in armed conflicts but also in the systemic neglect of oil-producing areas.

Quantitative research supports this perspective, as studies by Collier and Hoeffler (2024) on the economic causes of civil wars, as well as Fearon and Laitin (2023), highlight the structural deficiencies in oil-dependent economies. In the Niger Delta, oil revenue has frequently been mismanaged, resulting in substandard road construction, poor-quality school buildings, and ineffective healthcare facilities, further alienating local populations. These inadequacies fuel grievances and reinforce the argument that dependence on oil revenue correlates with both infrastructural neglect and heightened instability.

The Niger Delta stands as a prime example of the adverse effects of extractive industries when combined with governance failures and corporate irresponsibility. The cycle of substandard development projects, environmental degradation, and social unrest underscores the need for transparency, accountability, and sustainable practices in oil-rich communities. As Fearon (2015) pointed out, "oil predicts civil war risks," but in regions like the Niger Delta, it also predicts infrastructural failure and socio-economic marginalization, both of which contribute to long-term instability.

In the context of oil spill remediation, failure to properly manage these constraints often results in either prolonged execution periods, which worsen environmental conditions, or rushed completion, which leads to substandard restoration work. Without adequate oversight and accountability, remediation efforts risk being ineffective, further diminishing trust among affected communities and stakeholders.

Plate 2.5: HE Buhari addressing UNEP officials on Ogoni land Cleanup

Source: www.unep.org

Project delays, commonly referred to as "schedule overruns," occur when contractors fail to meet the agreed-upon completion timelines. This issue has become deeply entrenched in Nigeria's oil and gas sector, where only a small fraction of projects are completed within the stipulated timeframes. Despite the significant influx of investments into the sector, delays remain a persistent challenge. For instance, Total Energies has committed an additional $6 billion to Nigeria's petroleum industry (Ojakorotu and Gilbert, 2020).

Moreover, there are expectations of approximately $50 billion in investments aimed at advancing various projects, accounting for nearly 25% of Africa's total oil and gas development, with Nigeria leading the continent in hydrocarbon production (Ako et al., 2024). However, despite the availability of project management tools, performance measurement models, and other efficiency-enhancing techniques, there is widespread skepticism

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about the ability of project stakeholders to ensure timely execution. This skepticism stems from repeated failures to deliver projects as planned, ultimately affecting remediation efforts and the overall environmental sustainability of the industry.

One of the major obstacles to timely project completion in Nigeria's petroleum sector is the inadequacy of organizational leadership and strategic planning. A study conducted by Umuteme and Adegbite (2023) found that poor leadership structures and ineffective planning have caused significant delays, leading investors to question the feasibility of their commitments in the industry.

Without a well-coordinated approach to project execution, remediation work often suffers, as delays in infrastructure projects such as oil spill cleanups or environmental restoration result in prolonged environmental degradation. These inefficiencies not only stall progress but also undermine efforts to address ecological damage caused by oil exploration and production activities.

In furtherance, legislative uncertainties have further compounded project execution challenges. The delayed passage of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), which was eventually signed into law by former President Muhammadu Buhari in 2021 after years of legislative stagnation, created prolonged uncertainty among industry stakeholders (PwC Nigeria, 2021). This indecision led to project slowdowns, as investors and key industry players hesitated to move forward without clear regulatory guidelines. The sluggish pace of decision-making within the sector has significantly contributed to schedule overruns, affecting not only oil production projects but also environmental remediation efforts. When critical clean-up initiatives are stalled due to bureaucratic bottlenecks, affected communities continue to suffer the adverse effects of pollution for extended periods.

Another critical factor exacerbating project delays is the absence of a standardized framework for monitoring project performance across industry stakeholders, including both clients and contractors. The lack of a unified tracking system makes it difficult to assess project milestones, enforce accountability, and implement corrective measures when necessary. In the context of remediation work, this results in substandard clean-up operations that fail to restore the environment effectively. Without proper oversight, contractors may cut corners in remediation projects, leading to incomplete or ineffective restoration of polluted sites. This not only prolongs environmental hazards but also erodes public trust in the government's ability to enforce remediation commitments.

Inadequate Efforts to Foster Mutual Trust

Trust is the foundation of any successful environmental remediation effort, yet in the Niger Delta, the lack of mutual trust between communities, oil companies, and the government has led to persistent conflicts and resistance to cleanup projects. Years of environmental degradation, unfulfilled promises, and exclusionary policies have deepened the divide between stakeholders. Communities view oil companies as exploitative and insincere, while the government is often seen as complicit in the neglect of oil-producing regions. On the other hand, oil companies express concerns over security risks, vandalism, and community opposition, further complicating the remediation process (Ibaba & Ikelegbe, 2020).

Governments and public institutions are expected to play a crucial role in promoting an inclusive society; however, various perception surveys indicate that public confidence in government institutions is declining. According to the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer, only 43 percent of the global population expressed trust in their governments to act in the best interest of their citizens (Chan et al., 2024).

Similarly, findings from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other international studies have documented a consistent downward trend in political trust (Chan et al., 2024). In OECD nations, only 38 percent of individuals reported confidence in their governments in 2018, compared to approximately 42 percent in 2006 (OECD, 2017b). This steady decline in trust raises concerns about governance and the ability of public institutions to foster a sense of unity and accountability. In the case of the Niger Delta, the persistent lack of trust between local communities and the government has been exacerbated by years of

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neglect, environmental degradation, and unfulfilled remediation promises, reinforcing public skepticism about governmental commitments to sustainable development and social justice in the region.

Political trust is regarded as an essential foundation for a functional representative democracy (De Juan et al., 2024). The erosion of this trust is often interpreted as a sign of a democratic crisis, with far-reaching implications for the quality and effectiveness of governance structures, institutional credibility, and political leadership (Chan et al., 2024). This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Niger Delta, where communities have continuously faced marginalization and unfulfilled government pledges regarding economic development and environmental remediation. The repeated failure of successive administrations to address fundamental grievances such as oil pollution, land degradation, and resource control has deepened the disconnect between the government and local populations.

Scholarly research consistently suggests that the decline in public confidence in government poses a significant threat to the effectiveness of representative democracy (De Juan et al., 2024). However, there remains no clear consensus on the definition of trust, how it should be measured, the underlying causes of its decline, and the strategies required to rebuild it. In the context of the Niger Delta, government interventions to restore trust have been largely inadequate, often characterized by ineffective policies, lack of transparency, and failure to engage local communities in decision-making processes.

Trust is conceptualized in different ways, often incorporating relational and situational dynamics. It is widely recognized as the foundation of human interactions and institutional engagements, with some scholars defining it as the willingness of one party to rely on another to fulfill its commitments (De Juan et al., 2024) contends that trust should be understood in relational terms, arguing that trust extends beyond personal experiences or specific social circles, encompassing broader associations, including political and economic relationships.

Other researchers (Grandvoinnet et al., 2025; Grimes, 2019; Halachmi and Holzer, 2020) distinguish between "limited trust," which exists among close acquaintances such as family and neighbors, and "generalized trust," which applies to interactions between individuals who do not share personal connections. In the Niger Delta, government failure to cultivate either form of trust has led to widespread disillusionment. Years of unfulfilled promises, unaddressed grievances, and ineffective policy implementation have left communities feeling abandoned and skeptical of government interventions.

These team of scholars (Grandvoinnet et al., 2025; Grimes, 2019; Halachmi and Holzer, 2020) also emphasized that trust, particularly political trust, is inherently relational and situational, evolving based on interactions between citizens and state actors. Chan et al. (2024) conceptualizes trust in terms of expectations, suggesting that "A trusts B to do X," while Bauer expands on this idea by incorporating the dimension of time, asserting that "A trusts B to do X at T" (Chan et al., 2024). This evolving nature of trust highlights the necessity for governments to consistently demonstrate reliability and commitment to their obligations.

Social trust and political trust, while conceptually distinct, are interconnected and reinforce one another. Social trust refers to an individual's general confidence in others within society, independent of a specific situation, whereas political trust pertains to the faith citizens place in governmental institutions and actors to fulfill particular responsibilities (Bauer & Freitag, 2020).

Uslaner (2022) explains social trust with the notion of "A trusts," which implies a broad and generalized trust in people, while Hardin (2022) refines political trust as "A trusts B to do X," signifying an expectation placed on a defined entity for a specific action. Unlike social trust, political trust fluctuates over time, often influenced by the performance of government institutions, public expectations, and short-term political developments.

As Xia et al. (2021) highlights, the trust one has in family, friends, or fellow community members differs fundamentally from the trust citizens place in governmental bodies. This distinction is particularly relevant in the Niger Delta, where trust in government has been significantly eroded due to unfulfilled promises, environmental degradation, and socio-economic neglect. The decline in political trust can be attributed to multiple factors, with corruption standing as a primary contributor.

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Plate 2.6: Open Dialogue with community members to build trust

Source: www.wemineforprogress.com

Various studies have identified a strong correlation between governmental mistrust and widespread corruption (Uslaner, 2017). This is particularly relevant in the Niger Delta, where corruption has historically hindered the effective implementation of development projects, with funds allocated for environmental restoration and social infrastructure often misappropriated or mismanaged (Grimes, 2017). In a region heavily affected by resource exploitation yet deprived of basic infrastructure and economic empowerment, the continued neglect of fundamental socio-economic issues contributes to the widening rift between the government and local communities.

Trust in the Government

Governance is a complex and large-scale system responsible for overseeing various public institutions and evaluating the effectiveness of bureaucratic functions. Ensuring that government agencies operate efficiently and uphold democratic principles is essential for maintaining credibility. However, trust in the government is shaped by how well political entities align their policies with public expectations. According to Miller and Listhaug (2020), public confidence in governance is largely influenced by the extent to which policies meet societal expectations. The erosion or strengthening of this trust plays a fundamental role in determining the legitimacy of a government.

Over the years, trust between citizens and their government officials has been a critical element of effective governance. Yet, multiple challenges have emerged, causing a decline in public confidence. Socio-demographic factors significantly impact trust levels. Age, gender, economic status, and ethnic background all contribute to varying degrees of trust in governance (Christensen & Laegreid, 2025). Social gaps created by generational differences, economic inequalities, and ethnic or religious divisions have made it difficult for governments to foster trust (Gleave et al., 2021). Older generations, having experienced the evolution of state policies, often develop a better understanding of government operations, which may enhance their trust (Christensen & Laegreid, 2025). In contrast, younger individuals, facing economic hardships and political inefficacy, may express skepticism toward government actions.

Education also plays a crucial role in shaping public trust. Educated individuals are generally more informed

about government processes and the challenges of policy implementation, making them less likely to hold overly negative perceptions. Conversely, economically disadvantaged groups often struggle to have their voices heard in policymaking, further diminishing their faith in the government (Jamil et al., 2015).

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In recent decades, political and social tensions have further strained government trust. Issues such as racial discrimination, underrepresentation of minority groups, and economic disparities have fueled distrust. Global instances of ethnic cleansing and marginalization have deepened skepticism toward governmental institutions (UNDESA and UNDP, 2017). To restore trust, governments must address these challenges by enforcing strict policies against discrimination, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring fair representation across all sectors. Strengthening trust requires concrete efforts to bridge the gap between government policies and public needs, making governance more transparent, accountable, and inclusive.

Moreover, exposure to violence and economic instability also plays a crucial role in the deterioration of trust in governmental institutions. Xia et al. (2021) assert that prolonged exposure to violence fosters deep-rooted skepticism towards the state, particularly in regions where governmental intervention is perceived as ineffective or biased. The Niger Delta has witnessed decades of unrest, with militant activities and clashes between security forces and local groups arising from frustrations over economic exclusion and environmental degradation. The government's heavy-handed response, often prioritizing militarization over meaningful dialogue and development, has only served to alienate local communities further.

The erosion of trust between oil-producing communities and the government has become a pressing political issue in recent decades, drawing significant attention from scholars, policymakers, the media, and the public. Historical trends indicate a steady decline in public confidence in government institutions. For instance, Pew Research Center data highlights that trust in the U.S. government fell from over 70% in 1964 to just 19% by 2015 (Short, 2016). While this decline is often attributed to policy dissatisfaction (Clark & Veal, 2021) and an emphasis on national security over individual interests, similar patterns of distrust are evident in oil-rich regions, where government failures and corporate exploitation have fueled discontent.

In many oil-producing communities, particularly in the Niger Delta, mistrust stems from unfulfilled promises of development, environmental degradation, and economic marginalization. The 2018 economic recession in Europe deepened public frustration by exacerbating unemployment and financial instability, particularly among vulnerable groups (Foster & Frieden, 2017). A similar trend can be observed in oil-dependent economies, where the mismanagement of petroleum revenues, lack of infrastructural development, and perceived neglect of local populations have heightened disillusionment with the government.

The legacy of colonial administration in South and Southeast Asia created a bureaucratic structure that normalized corruption, favoritism, and inefficiency practices that persist in many oil-producing regions today. In the Niger Delta, for example, corruption manifests in the form of government officials colluding with multinational oil corporations, misallocating funds meant for local development, and prioritizing elite interests over those of the affected communities. Malpractices such as awarding unjustifiable favors to political allies, engaging in bribery, and ignoring environmental violations have become deeply entrenched, further eroding trust.

Scholars have attempted to conceptualize trust through various empirical studies. Kim (2015) compiled a list of trust elements that highlight key factors influencing public confidence in governance. In the context of oil-rich communities, the primary elements that undermine trust include broken agreements on resource revenue sharing, failure to address environmental pollution, lack of community engagement in decision-making, and the use of security forces to suppress local protests. Without genuine efforts to address these grievances, the chasm between oil-producing communities and the government will continue to widen, perpetuating instability and conflict.

Xia et al. (2021) attributes declining trust in government to evolving societal values and shifting public expectations. Citizens' faith in governmental institutions is shaped by both political and personal experiences, with factors such as past interactions with state authorities, perceived economic risks like unemployment, and financial instability influencing trust levels (Dalton, 2024; Murtin et al., 2022). Despite various initiatives aimed at restoring faith in state institutions, such efforts remain insufficient, as they fail to address the root causes of discontent. As scholars have noted, there is a direct link between political trust and citizens' willingness to comply with laws, regulations, and civic responsibilities. In regions like the Niger Delta, where governmental

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credibility is persistently questioned, efforts to enforce laws and promote stability are met with resistance, further complicating governance and peace-building initiatives.

Exclusion of Local voices in Governance and Policy-making

The exclusion of local voices in governance and policy-making in the Niger Delta, particularly in decisions related to environmental remediation projects, has deepened the region's marginalization in critical decision-making processes. This is in line with the views of Kariuki (2020), in which he suggested that despite being the most affected by environmental degradation, local communities are often sidelined in discussions regarding cleanup strategies, resource allocation, and developmental initiatives. This exclusion not only undermines their right to participate in shaping policies that directly impact their livelihoods but also reinforces historical patterns of neglect and exploitation. As decisions are predominantly made by external stakeholders, including government agencies and multinational corporations, without meaningful consultation with local leaders and community representatives, the resulting policies often fail to address the actual needs and concerns of the people.

The constitutional framework acknowledges local government as an independent and equal stakeholder within a decentralized system of governance. However, this autonomy has been significantly undermined by political structures and party arrangements that inherently operate within hierarchical frameworks. Consequently, the ability of local representatives to influence decision-making has been weakened, as greater authority is often vested in provincial officials rather than in locally elected leaders who possess firsthand knowledge of grassroots issues. This power imbalance limits the participation of local communities in governance, reducing their ability to shape policies that directly affect their welfare (Smith, 2019).

Moreover, a concerning trend has emerged in which highly skilled politicians and technical experts are migrating from municipal governance to provincial and national institutions. This shift further deprives local governments of the expertise required to effectively advocate for their communities and implement locally driven development initiatives.

As a result, local concerns are frequently absorbed into broader national agendas, where federal and provincial authorities dictate programs and policies without adequately considering the specific needs of affected municipalities. This top-down approach to governance results in decisions that are detached from the realities of local communities, further alienating grassroots stakeholders from the policymaking process (Brown & Peters, 2021).

In view of the obvious, the absence of fiscal decentralization has left local governments severely underfunded, limiting their ability to operate independently and sustain vital public services. Municipalities often rely on financial allocations from higher levels of government, leaving them vulnerable to shifting political priorities and bureaucratic inefficiencies. This financial dependence erodes the capacity of local administrations to address pressing community concerns, reinforcing a cycle in which local voices remain marginalized in governance and policy formulation (Jones, 2020). The continued exclusion of local perspectives not only weakens democratic participation but also fosters public disillusionment with governance structures, further diminishing trust in political institutions (Williams & Osei, 2022).

Addressing the exclusion of local voices in governance and policy-making requires a deep understanding of the mechanisms that contribute to their marginalization. Institutions and societal behaviors that reinforce prevailing attitudes particularly those upheld by dominant groups often result in the exclusion of certain communities. In some instances, this marginalization is intentional, as state institutions may enact discriminatory laws, policies, or programs that systematically sideline specific groups.

According to Birchall (2019), social exclusion manifests as the inability of individuals to actively participate in economic, social, political, and cultural life. While exclusion can affect anyone, certain demographic and social factors significantly increase the likelihood of being marginalized. These factors include institutional barriers,

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intra-group politics, financial constraints, discrimination, language differences, distrust in governance processes, and inadequate access to judicial or administrative support systems (O'Driscoll, 2018).

Plate 2.7: The living condition in Oil-rich parts of Niger Delta

Source: www.atlanticblackstar.com

In Nigeria, extensive research highlights the heightened vulnerability of marginalized groups such as women, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, internally displaced persons, children, older individuals, and those lacking official documentation. These communities often experience exclusion from governance and decision-making due to overlapping and sometimes contradictory socio-political factors.

The Department for International Development (DFID) defines social exclusion as a systematic disadvantage resulting from discrimination based on ethnicity, race, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, caste, descent, HIV status, migrant status, or geographical location (DFID, 2025, cited in O'Driscoll, 2018). Even institutions that are expected to provide impartial services, such as the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, are not immune to these discriminatory practices. This exclusion restricts the ability of affected communities to influence policies that directly impact their lives, further entrenching cycles of marginalization and social inequality (Birchall, 2019).

The concept of exclusion is multifaceted and operates across various spheres, including social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions. It is a dynamic process that evolves over time, affecting different individuals and communities to varying degrees. Moreover, exclusion is relational in nature, as it stems from interactions characterized by imbalances in power and access to resources. Such power disparities create fractures in social structures, undermining opportunities for participation, protection, and integration within governance processes (DFID, 2025). When local voices are systematically sidelined, it weakens democratic institutions by eroding trust in governance and limiting the capacity of marginalized groups to advocate for their interests effectively.

Community Leadership

Community leadership embodies the socio-political structure within a specific sphere of influence, such as a geographical territory or an institution. It plays a vital role in guiding and shaping the affairs of the people within that sphere, directing them toward achieving shared objectives. Langone (2019) defines community leadership as an exercise of influence and authority, contributing to public decision-making across various spheres, including organizations, localities, and regions. This suggests that community leadership extends beyond traditional governance, encompassing diverse areas of social and political life. Kuponiyi (2018) equates community leadership with the concept of community power structure, describing it as the intricate web of

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relationships between recognized leaders and the interaction of their roles within a community. Similarly, Jibowo (1992, as cited in Kuponiyi, 2018) characterizes power structures as the systematic distribution of authority and influence among individuals or groups within a society. This perspective highlights the structural nature of leadership, where power is not held by a single entity but rather distributed among various community actors.

Banyai (2019) offers a more participatory definition of community leadership, emphasizing its role in empowering local communities to take charge of their future. According to her, community leadership is not a hierarchical or top-down process; rather, it is about fostering partnerships between community leaders, council members, and the local population to promote a shared vision for the locality. This approach underscores the evolving nature of leadership, shifting from traditional authoritative roles to a more inclusive and participatory model.

Furthermore, the United Nations (as cited in Oyeozu, 2017) views community development as an ongoing social movement and educational process aimed at mobilizing individuals toward collective progress. Leaders play an indispensable role in this process by facilitating development initiatives, maintaining social harmony, and representing the interests of their people.

As Ekong (2003, cited in Kuponiyi, 2018) asserts, community leaders are the key decision-makers responsible for ensuring the well-being of their communities, whether rural or urban. Their roles are crucial in addressing local needs, resolving conflicts, and spearheading development programs. Deekor and Nnodim (2015) further outline the traditional responsibilities of community leaders, which include:

i. Education and Awareness: Leaders educate the community on pertinent issues, fostering awareness about governance, policies, and societal changes.
ii. Spokesperson and Role Model: They represent their communities in external affairs and serve as role models for ethical and responsible leadership.
iii. Legitimization of Projects: Community leaders validate and endorse development initiatives to ensure community acceptance and support.
iv. Planning and Execution of Development Programs: They spearhead initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, social services, and economic opportunities.
v. Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping: Leaders mediate disputes, maintain law and order, and ensure a harmonious community environment.

Ultimately, the nature of community leadership is dynamic, involving both authority and service, as leaders must balance power with the responsibility of fostering development and inclusivity. The effectiveness of community leadership depends on the ability of leaders to mobilize resources, engage stakeholders, and adapt to the evolving needs of their communities.

Models of Community Leadership

Model 1 – Traditional Leadership

Before colonial rule, traditional rulers held absolute authority in Nigerian communities, exercising control over governance and decision-making. Their leadership was deeply embedded in societal structures, and they played a significant role in community development, including the establishment of modern infrastructure. However, with widespread illiteracy among traditional leaders, their influence began to wane as communities increasingly sought autonomy. This decline in authority paved the way for alternative leadership structures to emerge, shifting the power dynamics in various regions.

Model 2 – Local Elite

The next wave of leadership came from the local elites, who were largely educated individuals and influential opinion leaders within their communities. This group included returning soldiers from World War II, former

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teachers, and clerks in government institutions, all of whom had gained exposure and experience beyond their localities. They were articulate, confident, and well-versed in governance, making them a formidable challenge to traditional rulers. During the 1950s and 1960s, the local elite gained widespread popularity, particularly among the youth. Some members even assumed chieftaincy titles, further solidifying their status as community leaders and reshaping traditional governance structures.

Model 3 – External Elites

The external elite refers to community members who, though residing in urban areas, remained deeply invested in the progress of their hometowns. This leadership group emerged prominently after the Nigerian Civil War in the 1970s, driven by the spirit of self-reliance and regional development. As more states were created by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the external elite gained prominence. Comprised of highly educated professionals from various industries, they wielded significant influence and were often regarded as role models and advisors for their communities. Their exposure to broader socio-political and economic systems enabled them to contribute meaningfully to local development initiatives.

Model 4 – Government-Appointed Leaders with the Community

The most recent addition to the Nigerian leadership landscape emerged with the establishment of local government structures. This shift introduced government-appointed officials, such as local government chairpersons, who became central figures in community governance. These officials were supported by law enforcement agencies, administrative staff, and representatives of the ruling political party, all of whom played integral roles in grassroots administration. Within this new framework, council members, local government personnel, and sectoral functionaries (including health workers, educators, and security officials) held varying degrees of power, shaping a more institutionalized form of leadership at the community level.

Handicaps of Community Leadership

While effective community leadership serves as the backbone of community development, it remains a complex and demanding task. Leaders, being human, are susceptible to personal flaws, errors in judgment, and interpersonal conflicts, which can significantly hinder the progress of their communities. The relationship between leaders and their followers, as well as among leaders themselves, is not always harmonious. Disagreements, power struggles, and incompetence in decision-making can all contribute to inefficiencies in leadership, thereby delaying or even derailing developmental efforts. One of the most notable limitations of community leadership, as pointed out by Onyeozu (2017), is illiteracy. For leaders to be truly effective, they must possess intelligence, education, and strong communication skills. If a leader lacks these qualities, the community members especially those who are more knowledgeable may dismiss his ideas and directives. Without proper education, leaders struggle to articulate a vision, develop policies, or engage in meaningful decision-making, which ultimately erodes trust and weakens their authority. In their study on leadership derailment, McCall and Lombardo (1983) (cited in Deekor and Nnodim, 2015:30) identified six major leadership deficiencies that often result in poor governance, reduced community engagement, and failed development projects:

i. Problems with Interpersonal Relationships

In oil-producing regions, leadership conflicts and internal power struggles often arise due to competition for resource control, contracts, and political influence. Some leaders prioritize personal enrichment over community welfare, leading to widespread corruption, nepotism, and a lack of transparency. These relational conflicts lead to stalled projects, mismanagement of community funds, and widespread disillusionment among the people. Instead of channeling oil wealth into education, infrastructure, and social services, many leaders fail to unite their communities around common developmental goals.

ii. Difficulties in selecting leaders

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In many oil-rich communities, leadership selection is often politically influenced, leading to the emergence of self-serving leaders rather than those truly committed to development. Without a strong and inclusive leadership team, oil-rich communities often experience widespread disorganization, poor governance, and financial mismanagement, leaving residents marginalized and underserved.

iii. Struggles in transitioning from tactical to strategic leadership

Many leaders in oil-producing communities struggle to move beyond short-term personal gains and focus on long-term strategic development. Instead of investing in education, skill development, and infrastructure, leaders often focus on short-term financial handouts, which fail to create lasting benefits. Many community leaders are unable to properly track oil revenue and project expenditures, leading to fund diversions and misappropriation. With a primary focus on financial gains, leaders often ignore the environmental impact of oil extraction, which causes pollution, loss of livelihoods, and displacement of people.

iv. Lack of follow-through

A common problem among leaders in oil-rich regions is the failure to deliver on agreements made with the people, oil companies, and government bodies. Many leaders announce ambitious initiatives but fail to execute them due to poor planning, corruption, or bureaucratic delays. Roads, schools, and healthcare facilities are often left incomplete, wasting valuable community funds. When corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects promised by oil companies are not properly followed up by community leaders, they often remain unfulfilled.

Interpersonal challenges among community leaders often arise due to over-ambition and self-interest. Leaders who are excessively focused on personal gains may alienate others, leading to division and resentment within the leadership structure. Additionally, some leaders develop an independent and isolated mindset, believing they possess superior knowledge and expertise, which can make them unapproachable and dismissive of alternative viewpoints.

In democratic societies, political exclusion remains a prevalent form of discrimination, with dominant groups often dictating policy priorities while sidelining underrepresented communities. This raises critical questions regarding the conceptualization of injustice whether exclusion alone adequately captures the complexity of governance failures or if a broader analytical framework is required. The exclusion of local voices in governance and policy-making leads to imbalanced decision-making structures that fail to reflect the diverse needs of society. As such, governance systems must incorporate more inclusive mechanisms to ensure equitable participation, thereby strengthening democratic accountability and fostering greater social cohesion (Birchall, 2019; O'Driscoll, 2018).

Asal, et al. (2016) reaffirm the conclusions drawn by earlier scholars, such as Gurr (2000), Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010), Collier and Hoeffler (2004), Fearon and Laite (2003), and Ross (2012), regarding the relationship between political exclusion and armed conflict. These studies indicate that when ethnic communities are denied participation in the political system, they are more likely to resort to organized violence as a means of expressing their grievances. The inability to engage with governance structures or resolve disputes through peaceful mechanisms often exacerbates tensions, leading to unrest.

Asal et al. (2016) specifically examine how the presence of oil resources influences the correlation between ethnic marginalization and insurgency. The wealth generated from natural resources particularly oil has frequently been associated with the emergence of civil conflicts. While one school of thought attributes political instability to the exclusion of ethnic groups, another emphasizes the role of resource wealth in fostering internal strife. These two perspectives have traditionally been examined separately; however, Asal et al. (2016) argue that a combined analysis could enhance our understanding of the complex interplay between ethnic political exclusion and violent conflict.

Political exclusion, as defined by Voelkel (2018) and Mbah, Nwangwu, and Ugwu (2019), involves

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systematically sidelining individuals or groups from political discourse and decision-making processes. Voelkel (2018) specifically explores the exclusion-divergence hypothesis, which suggests that political marginalization intensifies biases against those who are excluded from governance structures. Research by Ren, Wesselmann, and Williams (2018) supports this argument, showing that being ignored or excluded fosters feelings of resentment, hostility, and aggression.

Additionally, scholars such as Leary et al. (2023) have linked prolonged exclusion to extreme violent behavior, including acts of mass violence. Although some studies indicate that exclusion can sometimes lead to a desire for social reintegration (Williams, 2015), political exclusion is unique in that it originates from groups that marginalized individuals often view with deep distrust. Consequently, rather than encouraging reintegration, exclusion from governance is more likely to fuel resentment, deepen social divides, and increase the likelihood of unrest.

One of the core aspects of social exclusion lies in its ability to highlight power dynamics by identifying which actors hold influence and how they interact within societal structures. Scholars from non-economic disciplines have adopted the term "exclusion" in development studies because it captures broader societal interactions, power relations, and institutional processes beyond economic disparity or lack of access to essential services.

Vogt et al. (2025) argue that the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset categorizes an ethnic group as politically relevant if it has a political organization advocating for its interests at the national level or if it faces state-sponsored discrimination. Within this framework, exclusion is understood as either a lack of political influence or outright discriminatory policies enacted by the state, reinforcing systematic marginalization.

Nigeria, on a broader outlook, presents a particularly complex case of political exclusion, where ethnic and religious identities are deeply intertwined, leading to overlapping systems of marginalization. Religious minorities, for instance, frequently face social, political, and economic exclusion, which is further exacerbated by discriminatory practices within state institutions and broader society. Horizontal inequalities among ethnic groups persist, manifesting in disparities in wealth, access to public services, and education. Moreover, individuals classified as "non-indigenous" face legal and institutional barriers that prevent them from owning land, contesting for political office, or accessing essential social services such as education and public sector employment. These exclusionary policies and practices significantly undermine social cohesion and perpetuate governance failures (DFID, 2005; Vogt et al., 2015).

Similarly, internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria suffer from severe social isolation, with vulnerable subgroups—including women, children, and people with disabilities—being particularly susceptible to exploitation and neglect by authorities. In addition to IDPs, other marginalized communities, such as pastoralists, migrant farmers, and migratory fisherfolk, face systemic discrimination that hinders their ability to participate in governance and policy-making. These communities often lack representation in political processes and are frequently denied the opportunity to advocate for their interests, further entrenching their exclusion from national and local governance structures (O'Driscoll, 2018; Mbah, Nwangwu & Ugwu, 2019).

The systematic exclusion of local voices from governance and policy-making not only reinforces social inequalities but also increases the likelihood of political instability and conflict. Marginalized groups that are denied access to decision-making processes often perceive the state as illegitimate, fostering resentment and, in some cases, fueling insurgency. Addressing these governance failures requires inclusive policy reforms that empower local communities, enhance political representation, and dismantle institutional barriers to participation. Without these measures, the exclusion of local voices will continue to weaken democratic institutions, heighten social tensions, and threaten long-term political stability in Nigeria (Asal et al., 2016; Voelkel, 2018).

Failure to integrate Infrastructure Development and Employment Opportunities

The failure to integrate infrastructure development with employment opportunities significantly undermines sustainable economic growth and social stability. Infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges, and energy

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facilities, are often seen as catalysts for development, yet when these projects do not generate employment for local populations, their benefits remain limited (Calderón & Servén, 2020). According to Estache and Garsous (2022), infrastructure investments can only translate into broad-based economic growth when they are strategically linked to job creation, vocational training, and skills development. When this integration is absent, communities remain economically marginalized, leading to heightened social inequalities and discontent.

A critical issue in many regions, including the Niger Delta, is the reliance on external labor for major infrastructure projects, which excludes local communities from benefiting directly. Large-scale infrastructure developments often prioritize foreign or urban-based contractors, leaving local workers unemployed or confined to low-paying, temporary jobs (Okonta & Douglas, 2023).

This exclusion exacerbates economic disparities, particularly in regions where youth unemployment is already a significant challenge (Ogwumike & Aromolaran, 2017). Without deliberate policies to ensure local hiring and skills transfer, infrastructure development risks becoming an extractive process that benefits only a few while neglecting broader economic inclusion.

Moreover, infrastructure without a corresponding employment strategy results in wasted potential and underutilized resources (Calderón & Servén, 2020). For instance, transportation networks that fail to connect industries with local labor markets do little to improve employment rates.

Similarly, energy and water infrastructure that does not support small-scale enterprises or local industries limits its capacity to drive economic empowerment. Research by Calderón and Servén (2010) emphasizes that infrastructure-led development must be accompanied by targeted employment policies, such as local content requirements and workforce training programs, to maximize its socio-economic impact (Okonta & Douglas, 2023).

Inadequate integration of infrastructure and employment opportunities also deepens regional inequalities and fuels social unrest (Okonta & Douglas, 2023). In the Niger Delta, for example, extensive oil-related infrastructure has been developed, yet local communities continue to suffer from high unemployment and economic deprivation. The lack of meaningful participation in these projects has contributed to grievances that manifest in protests and, at times, violent conflicts (Okonta & Douglas, 2023).

Infrastructure encompasses the essential physical and institutional frameworks that facilitate the proper functioning of a society. This includes transportation networks such as roads and bridges, healthcare services, governance structures, industrial facilities, and buildings that support economic and social activities. Essentially, infrastructure serves as the backbone of economic progress, providing the necessary foundation for businesses, public services, and everyday life (World Bank, 2018).

It is not only an industry in itself but also a system that produces goods and services essential for economic operations. When infrastructure projects are developed without a direct connection to employment generation, their potential benefits remain untapped, contributing to persistent socio-economic disparities (Calderón & Servén, 2020).

Broadly speaking, infrastructure consists of interconnected internal systems that serve as the fundamental framework for a region's overall development. It is both the means through which development objectives are achieved and a reflection of these objectives themselves. A well-developed infrastructure supports industrial growth, facilitates market access, and enhances the quality of life for citizens.

However, when infrastructure expansion is not aligned with employment creation, the intended economic transformation remains incomplete. This disconnect often results in the exclusion of local populations from economic participation, leaving communities without sustainable livelihoods despite the presence of significant infrastructural investments (Ogwumike & Aromolaran, 2017).

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Plate 2.8: Poor Infrastructure in the Niger Delta

Source: www.accord.org.za

Plate 2.9: The recent collapse of a water tank built by the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in the Gwara area of Ogoni in Rivers State

Plate 2.10: The recent collapse of a water tank built by the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in Eleme area of Ogoni in Rivers State.

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Infrastructure is a critical indicator for evaluating the progress and status of a country, region, or state, as well as the overall well-being of its population. The term is frequently associated with key technical systems that sustain society, such as water supply, sanitation networks, transportation systems, electricity grids, and telecommunication services (Estache & Garsous, 2012). However, these investments should not exist in isolation; they must be integrated with strategies that enhance employment opportunities for the local workforce. Failure to do so leads to underutilization of human capital and exacerbates social inequalities, particularly in resource-rich but economically deprived areas such as the Niger Delta.

Infrastructure, which has been a fundamental concept in both French and English since 1875, originally referred to the foundational structures required for any system or operation to function (Stephen, 2010). The term, derived from the Latin word infra (meaning "below") and the French structure, initially described the groundwork necessary for railway construction before tracks could be laid. Over time, its meaning evolved to include essential public systems such as transportation networks, utilities, and communication systems. Despite this expansion, the gap between infrastructure development and job creation remains a critical issue, as large-scale projects often fail to generate sustainable employment opportunities for local communities.

Historically, infrastructure was perceived mainly as physical structures such as roads, railways, water supply systems, and energy distribution networks. However, modern interpretations extend beyond these physical aspects to include management practices, operational efficiency, and policy frameworks designed to support economic growth and social development (Stephen, 2020). The failure to align these infrastructural advancements with employment opportunities has contributed to persistent economic disparities, where infrastructure is developed, but local populations do not benefit from stable jobs or improved living conditions. This disconnect is evident in many urban and rural areas where large-scale projects are executed without adequately involving or training the local workforce, leading to continued unemployment and underemployment.

The development of rural infrastructure in Nigeria has been structured into five major phases, spanning several national development plans. These include the First National Development Plan Period (1962-1968), the Second National Development Plan Period (1970-1974), the Third National Development Plan (1975-1980), the Fourth National Development Plan Period (1980-1985), and the Post-Fourth Plan Period (1985-1999). Each of these phases had different objectives and budget allocations, but early plans notably lacked a clear strategy for addressing rural infrastructure development.

The First National Development Plan (1962-1968) had a total budget of ₦1,353 million but did not provide a detailed framework for improving rural infrastructure. While agriculture remained a key source of foreign exchange, the focus of the plan was on encouraging local farmers to aggregate their produce for large-scale government purchases aimed at export (FGN, 1962). The absence of targeted investment in rural infrastructure meant that rural communities continued to struggle with poor roads, limited access to clean water, and inadequate social amenities. Following the end of the Nigerian Civil War, the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974) was introduced to rebuild the economy, particularly in war-affected regions. This phase sought to create a more unified, fair, and self-reliant nation by outlining five broad national goals. A total of ₦2,050.738 million was allocated for various developmental projects. However, similar to the first plan, there was no direct commitment to rural infrastructure development, leaving many rural areas without essential services and facilities needed for economic growth and improved living conditions.

The international community has increasingly recognized the importance of integrating infrastructure development with employment generation, particularly in light of global efforts toward sustainable development. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight this issue, particularly Goal 9, which focuses on industry, innovation, and infrastructure. The aim is to create resilient and inclusive economies by ensuring that infrastructure projects not only enhance connectivity and service provision but also create meaningful job opportunities for local populations (UNDP, 2021). However, despite these global commitments, many countries struggle to bridge the gap between infrastructure expansion and workforce development. Investments in large-scale projects often prioritise technological advancements and efficiency over local labour participation, resulting in economic growth that does not translate into widespread employment benefits.

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One of the most pressing concerns is the environmental and social impact of infrastructure projects that prioritise economic expansion over sustainable development. Climate change discussions have placed increasing emphasis on green infrastructure, projects that not only support economic growth but also address environmental concerns through sustainable practices (Stephen, 2010). However, when these projects fail to incorporate local labour and skills development, they contribute to socio-economic imbalances rather than fostering inclusive development. Infrastructure should not only serve as the backbone of economic systems but also act as a catalyst for job creation, skills enhancement, and long-term employment opportunities for communities affected by such developments.

Without deliberate efforts to align infrastructure development with job creation, the economic potential of these projects remains unrealized, perpetuating cycles of unemployment and social unrest (Okonta & Douglas, 2003).

To ensure that infrastructure development translates into broad-based economic growth, it is imperative that governments and policymakers implement inclusive strategies. These should include policies that mandate the hiring of local labor, workforce development programs, and investments in vocational training (World Bank, 2018). Without such integration, infrastructure projects may succeed in enhancing connectivity and industrial capabilities, but they will fail to address the pressing issue of unemployment and economic marginalization. A comprehensive approach to infrastructure development one that prioritizes employment alongside physical expansion is crucial for fostering long-term, sustainable economic progress (World Bank, 2018).

The examination of existing research on the failure of public infrastructure projects in Nigeria highlights several critical issues that hinder successful project execution. Among the primary factors identified are corruption, lack of expertise in project management, inadequate planning, and the employment of inexperienced personnel who lack the necessary skills to oversee large-scale infrastructure developments (Olalusi & Otunola, 2022). The inability to correctly estimate project costs, failure to implement risk management strategies, and poor comprehension of project requirements have significantly contributed to the inefficiency and ultimate collapse of numerous public sector initiatives (Efenudu, 2020). Corruption remains a pervasive problem, further undermining efforts to establish sustainable infrastructure that could facilitate economic development and employment opportunities (Oyewobi, Ganiyu, Oke, Ola-awo & Shitu, 2021).

A significant portion of Nigeria's population, nearly 70%, resides in rural areas, where they encounter numerous challenges that hinder their productivity. These challenges include environmental constraints, poor infrastructure, difficulties in accessing markets, outdated technology, institutional barriers, high labour costs, inadequate agricultural incentives, and a lack of sustainable rural development programmes (Oyesola, 2000). Rural communities serve as the backbone of food and fibre production, major contributors to capital formation, and essential markets for locally manufactured goods (Adedeji et al., 2014). Despite their economic importance, rural areas have struggled with persistent underdevelopment due to insufficient investment in infrastructure and services.

Over the years, various governments in Nigeria have made efforts to improve rural infrastructure, recognising its role in boosting agricultural productivity and economic growth. However, progress has been inconsistent, often hindered by policy changes, limited funding, and poor implementation. These efforts will be explored in detail in the following sections of this study, categorised into three key phases of rural infrastructural development: the Pre-Independence Period, the Post-Independence Plan Period, and the Post-Fourth Plan Period. Understanding these phases provides insight into the evolution of rural infrastructure policies and their impact on rural communities.

On the same side of the spectrum, the mismanagement of infrastructure projects at the local government level has been widely documented. Studies indicate that apart from corruption, factors such as delays in budget releases, disruptions caused by community protests, labor strikes, and inaccurate assessments of project environments all play a role in project failures (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2019). Incompetence among contractors has also been a significant challenge, leading to substandard construction, cost overruns, and incomplete projects that fail to serve the communities for which they were intended. These structural inefficiencies not only waste public

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resources but also limit the capacity of infrastructure projects to generate employment, thereby exacerbating economic inequalities and social discontent.

Another major issue that has been extensively discussed in academic literature is the inconsistency in government policies, which has had a detrimental impact on infrastructure project continuity in Nigeria. Frequent changes in political leadership often result in the abandonment of existing projects, as incoming administrations prioritize their own initiatives rather than completing ongoing developments (Efenudu, 2020). While this problem was particularly evident during Nigeria's military rule, it has persisted in democratic governance, where successive governments continue to disregard projects initiated by their predecessors (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2022). This lack of policy continuity not only disrupts the long-term infrastructure development agenda but also deprives citizens of the economic benefits and employment opportunities that well-executed projects could provide. Without a commitment to sustaining infrastructure initiatives beyond political cycles, efforts to integrate infrastructural expansion with job creation will remain ineffective.

The Nigerian government's involvement in infrastructure development can be traced back to 1917 when the colonial administration introduced the township order, which categorized settlements into three classes. The first-class townships were reserved for colonial officials and their workers, featuring a high concentration of infrastructure and government facilities, with Lagos being a prime example. In contrast, the second and third-class townships, which housed the majority of the local population, received little to no investment in infrastructure or public services. This unequal distribution of resources created a stark divide between urban and rural areas, a pattern that persisted for decades.

It was not until 1952 that local government units were established in Western Nigeria with the aim of extending infrastructure and public services to rural communities. However, the funds allocated to these local councils were insufficient, barely covering the operational costs of council headquarters and essential services. As a result, rural areas continued to lag in development, facing significant challenges in accessing basic amenities. Although colonial infrastructure policies had some minimal benefits, they primarily served the interests of the ruling class rather than addressing the needs of the broader population. The investment approach set during the colonial era was later adopted and reinforced by successive governments after independence in 1960.

The failure to align infrastructure development with employment generation is one of the most significant challenges facing Nigeria's economic growth (Efenudu, 2020). Infrastructure projects should serve as catalysts for job creation, skill acquisition, and industrial growth. However, when these projects are poorly executed due to corruption, mismanagement, and policy inconsistencies, they fail to achieve their intended purpose. Instead of fostering economic inclusion, they contribute to stagnation, leaving communities without the necessary public services and employment opportunities that well-planned infrastructure could have provided.

To address this, there is a need for stricter accountability measures, enhanced project oversight, and policies that ensure continuity in infrastructure development. Only through such reforms can infrastructure investments translate into sustainable economic opportunities for the Nigerian workforce (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2022).

Gender Disparities in Project participation and Benefits

Gender disparities in project participation and benefit distribution remain a pressing issue in the Niger Delta, particularly in environmental remediation initiatives. Women in the region are often marginalized in decision-making processes, excluded from employment opportunities, and receive minimal economic benefits from environmental restoration projects (UNDP, 2020). Despite bearing the brunt of ecological degradation—such as loss of farmland and water pollution women are rarely consulted or integrated into remediation strategies, which are predominantly male-dominated (Ekhator, 2018).

This exclusion perpetuates socio-economic inequalities, limiting women's ability to access financial compensation, skills training, and employment linked to these projects (Ibaba & Ikelegbe, 2010). Addressing these disparities requires deliberate policies to ensure gender-inclusive participation in project planning and benefit-sharing mechanisms, fostering equitable development in the Niger Delta.

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Despite the substantial revenue generated from oil exploration in the Niger Delta, communities in the region continue to grapple with severe socio-economic challenges, including environmental pollution, economic marginalization, and persistent social conflicts. Historically, women within these oil-producing communities have been largely excluded from crucial decision-making processes, thereby restricting their capacity to actively participate in and benefit from oil-related developmental programs (UNDP, 2020). This exclusion has reinforced existing gender disparities, preventing women from accessing opportunities related to resource management, employment, and economic empowerment.

In an attempt to address these systemic issues, the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) was enacted in 2021, aiming to improve oil resource governance and ensure that host communities receive equitable economic benefits. A key feature of the PIA is the establishment of Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs), which serve as a mechanism for financing and implementing sustainable development initiatives within oil-producing regions (Olowola, 2024). Recognizing the historical marginalization of women, the PIA includes provisions that mandate female representation in community committees and decision-making bodies, fostering a more inclusive approach to local governance (Olowola, 2024).

Plate 2.11: Women in their farmlands; in affected areas of Ogoni land

Source: Green Leaf Weeky

To assess the effectiveness of these gender-inclusive policies, CSR-in-Action recently conducted research examining the extent of women's participation in the implementation of the PIA across oil-producing states. The study, carried out in Akwa Ibom, Delta, and Rivers States, employed a multi-stage sampling approach, incorporating structured questionnaires, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather insights from community members and stakeholders (Olowola, 2024). The findings of this research are critical in evaluating the current state of women's involvement in resource governance and ensuring that gender disparities in project participation and benefit distribution are effectively addressed.

The implementation of community support initiatives, as stipulated in the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), has been significantly inadequate. Findings indicate that 70.6 percent of respondents perceived a low level of execution of these provisions, suggesting that the intended development benefits have not been fully realized within oil-producing communities. This lack of effective implementation has further perpetuated gender disparities, as women—who are already marginalized in decision-making structures—continue to face barriers in accessing the benefits promised by the PIA (Olowola, 2024).

Another major issue is the limited awareness and participation of community members in the governance of the Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs). According to research, only 35.7 percent of respondents

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acknowledged the existence of an advisory committee for the HCDT, while a mere 8 percent were actively involved in community committees (Olowola, 2024).

Awareness of the PIA remains alarmingly low, particularly among men and women in the Oleh community, Delta State, where only 9 percent of men and 22 percent of women reported being aware of the Act. This lack of awareness translates to reduced engagement in governance processes, further disadvantaging women who already face structural barriers in accessing information and leadership roles (Ibaba and Ikelegbe, 2020).

In terms of women's representation, findings reveal that only 36.2 percent of respondents observed female participation in community committees. The inclusion of women in decision-making processes within the oil sector was even more limited, with only 5 percent of respondents in the Oleh community reporting female involvement in oil company activities. This exclusion has significant implications for equitable resource distribution, as it limits women's ability to influence decisions that affect their livelihoods, economic opportunities, and overall well-being (Ibaba and Ikelegbe, 2020).

The economic and social benefits of oil-related development have also been unevenly distributed across communities. In Akwa Ibom State, 28.5 percent of respondents in the Ekpene community reported positive impacts from the presence of Mobile, citing increased family productivity, higher income, and improved health conditions. However, in Delta State, despite the presence of major oil companies such as Shell and Chevron, there was no substantial improvement in family income or productivity. This discrepancy highlights the uneven distribution of economic benefits and the continued marginalization of certain groups, particularly women, who remain on the periphery of decision-making and resource allocation (Ibaba and Ikelegbe, 2020).

Impacts

Women's involvement in economic activities and decision-making processes plays a crucial role in enhancing family productivity and financial stability. In regions where women actively participate in economic ventures, families tend to experience improved income levels, leading to greater household security. For instance, in Akwa Ibom State, the presence of Mobil has had a positive influence on family productivity and income, as reported by 22.5 percent and 18 percent of respondents, respectively (Mboho, 2023).

Plate 2.12: Woman receiving certificate at HYPREP Livelihood Programme

Source: https://hyprep.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/WO-7.jpg

When women are economically empowered, they contribute significantly to household financial stability, ensuring better access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and overall well-being for their families (Mboho, 2023). However, in many oil-producing communities, gender disparities in access to economic opportunities persist, limiting the potential contributions of women to economic development.

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Beyond economic empowerment, women's inclusion in community committees and health initiatives has a direct impact on family health and well-being. The ability of women to influence health-related decisions ensures that maternal and child health needs are prioritized. In Rivers State, 24 percent of respondents from the Buan community acknowledged that Shell's intervention had contributed to improved maternal health, while 21 percent noted similar improvements resulting from Chevron's presence (Mboho, 2023). Women's active participation in health-related decision-making leads to better healthcare outcomes, including enhanced maternal and infant health services, which are critical for sustainable community development. Unfortunately, the exclusion of women from leadership positions in community health initiatives continues to limit their ability to advocate for better healthcare infrastructure and services (UNDP, 2020).

Education and literacy levels also benefit significantly from increased female participation in governance and development projects. Educated women are more likely to invest in their children's education, creating a positive cycle of improved literacy and educational attainment. In Rivers State, 45 percent of respondents in the Buan community affirmed that Shell's initiatives had contributed to improved education and literacy. Women's representation in scholarship committees and educational programs ensures that a greater number of children, particularly girls, have access to quality education. However, despite these positive impacts, systemic barriers continue to limit women's full participation in decision-making processes related to education, resulting in unequal opportunities for many young girls in oil-producing communities (Mboho, 2023).

The exclusion of women from economic and governance structures also contributes to persistent poverty and food insecurity. Women's inclusion in economic activities and decision-making is instrumental in reducing extreme hunger and poverty.

In the Mkpanak community of Akwa Ibom State, 15 percent of respondents indicated that Mobil's presence had led to a reduction in extreme hunger and poverty. When women have access to financial resources and employment opportunities, they are better positioned to advocate for and implement development projects that address economic inequalities and food security challenges. However, many women in the Niger Delta remain marginalized in resource allocation and economic initiatives, further exacerbating gender-based disparities in economic empowerment (World Bank, 2021).

Women also play an essential role in environmental conservation and sustainability efforts, particularly in communities affected by oil extraction. Their participation in community committees helps ensure that environmental concerns, such as oil spills and land degradation, are addressed. Despite their underrepresentation, women in the Ugborodo community of Delta State have been involved in compensation processes for oil spills, underscoring the importance of their inclusion in environmental governance. Expanding women's roles in environmental stewardship can enhance community efforts to mitigate environmental damage and advocate for sustainable development policies. However, prevailing gender disparities continue to restrict their influence in decision-making, reducing the effectiveness of community-led environmental management strategies (Mboho, 2023).

Climate Change

Climate change, which has led to a plethora of negative impacts on the world, remains a raging issue globally. The destructive effects of climate change can be discerned in the short term via natural hazards including drought, flooding, landslides, storms and tidal waves; and in the long term via the continuing destruction of the environment Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso, (2018). Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in 2021 has highlighted the various threats climate change poses to the survival of the planet. The report evidences that there has been a big rise in global warming and the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which are having negative impacts on the planet and on billions of people. No part of the world is left out from climate change impacts. This has led to droughts, heatwaves, heavy rainfall and cyclones occurring in different parts of the world. Africa is one of the places bearing the brunt of climate change. According to the IPCC, 'Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate variability and change, Anozie, and Wingate, (2020).

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The impacts of climate change will have negative consequences on the human rights and wellbeing of its victims in Nigeria (especially the Niger Delta). In Nigeria, climate change has led, among other things, to increased and frequent flooding, rising sea levels and droughts. For example, the flooding that took place in late 2022 in Nigeria affected more than 2.5 million people and led to the widespread destruction of farmland in the country. Nigeria is one of the ten countries categorized by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) as highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. This has been exacerbated by a plethora of factors not limited to poverty, the activities of multinational companies (MNCs) and endemic environmental injustice issues in many parts of the country (especially the Niger Delta, wherein the oil and gas industry is located) Atubi, Ogbija, and Ojeh, (2015).

The activities of MNCs in the Nigerian oil and gas industry also have negative impacts on the climate. Gas flaring is a regular occurrence in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (where the oil and sector is predominantly located). Gas flaring occurs 'when oil is pumped out of the ground, the gas produced is separated and, in Nigeria, most of it is burnt as waste in massive flares'. Therefore, in the process of refining, the natural gas, otherwise called 'associated gas', is removed from the crude oil being refined. Notwithstanding a plethora of laws and regulations, the Nigerian government has been unable to tackle the menace of gas flaring in the country. Nigeria is one of the 'top ten flaring countries [that] accounted for 75 percent of all gas flaring and 50 percent of global oil production in 2021'Atubi, Ogbija, and Ojeh, (2015). Nigeria's significant economic reliance on the oil and gas industry has limited its ability to address the human rights and climate-related issues emanating from gas flaring.

There are many definitions and understandings of climate change litigation. The use of climate change litigation is soaring globally, and it has become a key slant of the emergent transnational litigation. According to scholars, climate change litigation is still in its infancy in Nigeria. This chapter explores how it might expand in future and considers it's potential to improve climate justice in the country Atubi, Ogbija, and Ojeh, (2015).

Plate 2.13: A field trip to the Bomuu oil impacted site in Gokana LGA

Crude Oil Injustice

There are general laws in place which set standards that are relevant for ensuring that natural resource-bearing communities are humanely, fairly and justly treated in the event of commercial exploitation of the resources in their communities. At the minimum, laws relevant to Nigeria, particularly the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter) which has been properly domesticated in Nigeria via the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act guarantees in Article 24 the right of all peoples to a "generally satisfactory environment favourable to their development". Its Articles 21 (on the right to natural resources) and 22 (on the right to development) establish the right of communities to an equitable share of the benefits emanating from natural resource exploitation in their communities1; and this point was clearly made and applied in the 2010 decision of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' in the case of Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) v. Kenya Uga, (2021). In addition, there is the right to "enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health" provided for in Article 16(1) of the African Charter.

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Yet, as hinted above by Uga, (2021), the injustice to the people of the Niger Delta as it related to oil exploration and exploitation manifests on the two aforementioned levels (which indicates non-compliance at best, and disregard at worse, of the above rights and obligations): first, with respect to the sharing of benefits emanating from oil production, and second, as it relates to the degradation of the environment and its consequences for personal health and means of livelihood. Before the commencement of oil production in commercial quantity in the Niger Delta, the region was essentially an unspoiled environment which supported substantial natural resources for the resident population.

ThisDay. (2004) argues that demonstrating the richness of the Niger Delta environment pre-oil production, writers have indicated that the environment, Included among other things, medicinal herbs and barks, fish and shrimp, crabs and clams, wood for energy and shelter, as well as a stable soil for farming and habitat for exotic wildlife. There was the Delta elephant, the white crested monkey, the river hippopotamus, as well as a colorful array of exotic birds, crocodiles, turtles and alligators. The region also accounted for a large percentage of Nigeria's commercial fisheries industry (Nweke, 2013).

Ironically however, oil exploration activities which started in 1956 in Oloibiri town in the Niger Delta have since become the greatest cause of underdevelopment and environmental degradation in the region. This is so given that oil production activities in the region are executed in an unsustainable manner and largely without the best available technology with the complacency and complicity of the Nigerian government that holds major shares in its various joint ventures with the major multinational oil producing companies. Thus, the operations have resulted, among others, in extensive gas flaring and massive oil spills which have devastated water bodies and forests, caused serious land pollution and loss of biodiversity, given rise to persistent noise pollution (form seismographic blasts which affect the integrity of buildings, roads and other physical structures) and light pollution (from glass flaring), as well as air pollution resulting in high occurrences of acid rain in the region.

As expected and well documented Sultana, (2022), this massive environmental pollution has produced severe health problems, e.g. a high level of respiratory infects and skin diseases, to mention as few, among the residents of the region; frequently devastating fishing and farming grounds as well as forests, it has also hugely affected in a negative way their meanings of livelihood as their main occupations are usually fishing, farming and hunting, thus, further driving them into poverty. Further compounding the unjust treatment of the people in this region, in the event of such environmental pollution, if at all, there is hardly a reasonably attempt to rectify the damages done to the environment, health and socio-economic well-being of the people, or even compensate (adequately) the affected people and communities.

The scale of the above issues is exemplified by Sultana (2022), and can be better appreciated in the state of the environment in Ogoniland as captured in the popular 2011 UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) Report on the Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland with sufficient and shocking particularity. At one site in Eleme Local Government Area "the study found heavy contamination present 40 years after an oil spill occurred", at another site "8 cm layer of refined oil was observed floating on the groundwater which serves the community wells" Sultana (2022). On the loss of means of livelihood, it was found that "[w]here a number of entrepreneurs had set up fishing farms in or close to the creeks, their businesses have been ruined by an ever-present layer of floating oil". As a public health emergency, "community members at Nisisioken Ogale are drinking water from wells that is contaminated with benzene… at levels over 900 times above the [WHO] guideline"; some well samples were found to be "at least 1000 times higher than the Nigerian drinking water standard". Putting scenarios like these together, and absent other parts of the Niger Delta which are severely polluted as well, UNEP concluded that "the environmental restoration of Ogoniland could prove to be the world's most wide-ranging and long term oil clean-up exercise ever undertaken", and will actually take "25 - 30 years" to be completed Sultana (2022).

For decades now, the people of the Niger Delta have been suffering from intense gas flaring from the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) facility in the midst of the community. Massive gas furnace being flared horizontally has even led to the closure of the only school in that community, due to the noxious fumes being emitted into the atmosphere which is devastatingly compromising their respiratory system. Families in the area can no longer sleep at night due to excessive heat and massive air pollution. The most painful part is that

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the residents of the community were not consulted to inform them of the commencement of the flares. We do not know which community will be next to cry out. The government, through its regulators – the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) – needs to wake up to their responsibility (Zhang, 2022).

The IOCs have almost concluded their divestment plans with no strong statement from our traditional leaders to ensure they pay compensations and restore polluted environment before their divestment. Our traditional leaders have forgotten the implication of divestment without environmental restoration, in addition to the environmental damages, the stranded asset, stranded personnel and stranded communities all these the IOCs are leaving for the incoming indigenous companies to inherit, who cannot be held accountable for the previous damages. The region is yet to see any major traditional ruler who has taken a stand in the demand for environmental justice. Our environment is our life. If what we hold sacred, our traditional economy system, which is our only means of building cohesion of the people is almost completely destroyed, what do we have to bequeath to our children and the unborn generation? Our farmlands are completely destroyed. Before oil exploitation in our region, my great-grand father used to share with us the story of the richness of our natural ecosystem and biodiversity in the region.

But, since the advent of oil extraction, the environment and entire natural ecosystem has suffered serious damages – aquatic life, vegetation, forests, land animals and human beings. These have all been greatly and negatively impacted. He also told us that the economic trees like walnuts, mangoes, oranges, and palm oil, among others, were their investment crops, with high yields that come with good economic returns. But, today, these crops only produced, little or no yield, even cassava, yams are also greatly affected. All these are due to environmental pollution – gas flare and oil pollution (Wurthmann, 2006). This is the time for our traditional rulers to speak with one voice, and do it now before it is too late. They should join the campaign to #SaveNigerDeltaEnvironmentNow and the demand for environmental audit, remediation, clean energy transition parks/initiatives to create green and environmentally friendly jobs as a sustainable alternative measure and financial compensation for damaged local communities in the region (Wilson, 2015).

Since 1956 when oil was discovered in the region, we have suffered continuous environmental pollution with no substantial benefit for our people. The Environmental challenges of the Niger Delta Region caused by the activities of the oil and gas industries as well as the disregard of the region by both the oil firms and the state of Nigeria have been contentious in the discourse of environmental issues in Nigeria. In this dilemma, it appears the oil communities are powerless in the face of the obnoxious display of might and the right to make and apply policies that affect the general well-being of the Niger Delta people and their environment. The question that might arise in this situation is the ethical perception of some of those who make and execute policies about the ecological problems of the region (Wegener, 2020).

Environmental challenges of the Niger Delta have elicited fervent and contentious interest in the environmental discourse of the Nigerian state. These environmental quandaries largely result from the activities of the oil and gas industry as well as the neglect by the oil firms and policy makers, despite the array of intervention schemes that have been initiated over the years. Agencies such as the Niger Delta Basin Development Board (NDBDB) established in 1965, the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) established in 1992, and lately the Niger Development Commission (NDDC) established in 2000 have been created to address the problems of the people and protect environment of the Niger Delta. But not much in the development of the region and environmental sustainability was achieved (Varvastian and Kalunga, 2020).

Thus, assessing the environmental situations in the Niger Delta a few years ago, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) had described the Niger Delta as “a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor and economic conflict” (Onuorah 2006). It subsequently counseled: “Addressing the Niger Delta’s many developmental challenges begins with using its vast oil wealth to create an environment in which people can flourish. People should be able to live valued and dignified lives, overcome poverty, enjoy a peaceful atmosphere and expect sustainable development” (Onuorah 2006).

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Besides shortchanging the people of the Niger Delta at large, and the Ogoni people in particular, in terms of repatriating a significant proportion of the oil and gas proceeds to the region where the recourse is situated, the question of oil spills, gas flaring, and the overall destruction of lands and waterways have been a major bone of contention between the people, the various oil companies operating within the region, and the federal government of Nigeria (Tamuno, 2011; Afinotan and Ojakorotu, 2009; Peel, 2005; Ako, Okonmah, and Ogunleye, Taiwo, 2009; Luqman, 2011; Tobor and Muzorewa, 2016; Babatunde, 2012; Amaraegbu, 2011; Okoli, 2013; Owolabi, and Okwechime, 2007). It is against the foregone background that the study seeks to conduct a critical evaluation on ecological injustice in Ogoniland since 1958. Moreso, the series of conflicts that have engulfed Ogoniland over the issue of oil spills, and environmental degradation are examined; as well as the numerous attempts both by the federal government and the various oil and gas companies to ameliorate the plight of the Ogoni people. One other critical dimension to this study is the aspect that deals with revisionism on the struggle for ecological justice by the likes of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the MOSOP since the 1990s most especially through the Ogoni Bill of Rights (http://www.mosop.org/Ogoni_Bill_of_Rights_1990.pdf; Senewo, 2015). The rationale for this research is born out of the fact that since the emergence of the President, Muhammadu Buhari-led government in 2015, the issue of Ogoni clean-up has continued to garner so many debates both among policymakers and stakeholders within the Niger Delta region. For instance, the executive governor of River State – Nyesom Wike – once asserted during a public briefing in Ogoniland 'they promised you they will do Ogoni clean up. Has it been cleaned?' (Reed, 2021). After that statement, the Ogoni clean-up, it would appear, has continued to remain a mere political issue, that is stirred up to score political points (Reed, 2021). In order to execute the aim and objectives herein, this study has been compartmentalized into sub-headings. It begins with an introduction, where the background argument is laid out. Thereafter, the study area follows, then the theoretical framing, a brief history of oil exploration and spillages, and the struggle for environmental justice with greater emphases on Ogoniland, especially since the 1990s, when Saro-Wiwa and the MOSOP internationalized the struggle for better living condition in the region.

Interestingly, the last decade has seen a rushing wave of local and international scholarly interest in the Niger Delta1 resistance. Much of this interest has been instigated by the immense grassroots mobilization championed by the MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People) leader, Ken Saro Wiwa, and the circumstances surrounding his execution by the military regime of Sani Abacha. Although the Nigerian leadership has changed twice since Saro Wiwa's demise, and there is now a democratically elected government in the country, oppositional activities in the oil-rich province has probably only gained in momentum, and the region's 'drift towards anarchy' (to use President Obasanjo's words) continues unabated.

The Niger Delta resistance is indicated by unrelenting demand for local resource rights, calls for the repeal of laws vesting ownership and control of land and mineral resources in the national government, calls for a national conference to work out new terms of association for country's ethnic nationalities, demand for 'fair and equitable' access of the oil communities to the country's oil revenues, as well for adequate systems to deal with the social and environmental problems attendant to oil production in the province. These demands have largely met with rebuff in government circles, and today, nearly five decades after commercial oil deposits were struck in Nigeria, the oil region, and indeed the entire country, remains prostrate economically. Worst, Nigeria's brand of petro-capitalism is unequalled in terms of corruption, opportunism and a near-total lack of commitment to community and national development. Generally, research – both scholarly and journalistic – has focused on social and environmental concomitants of oil production in the area, and increasingly analyses are emerging that connect the lingering crisis to some dominant social science discourses. Agbola and Alabi (2023) use it to further push the core environmental racism position that economically and politically dominant social groups deliberately ignore or actively promote environmental catastrophes in the neighbourhoods of weak and powerless minorities. While this argument does have the potential of bringing out a critical dimension of the Niger Delta problem, namely, poor social and environmental remediation – indeed the lack of development – one has to be cautious with the premise that the driving force of the Niger Delta's neglect is ethnicity.

In 2011 the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) released a report documenting the devastating impact of the oil industry in Ogoniland, and set out urgent recommendations for clean-up. But the new investigation highlights that "emergency measures" proposed by UNEP have not been properly implemented and that the billion-dollar clean-up project launched by the Nigerian government in 2016 has been ineffective. Over five decades, oil and

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gas extraction have caused large-scale, continued contamination of the water and soil in Ogoni communities. The continued and systematic failure of oil companies and government to clean up have left hundreds of thousands of Ogoni people facing serious health risks, struggling to access safe drinking water, and unable to earn a living.

Numerous conflicts of interest around Shell have also been revealed involving the management of the clean-up agency, HYPREP, and the Nigerian government. Many scholars have argued that Shell cannot be allowed to divest from the onshore oil industry in the Niger Delta before it takes responsibility for its toxic legacy of pollution and the safe decommissioning of abandoned oil infrastructure. The oil giant is leaving behind petroleum-contaminated rivers and streams and large areas of polluted land that have devastated the lives and livelihoods of millions of people living in the Niger Delta. Shell claims it cleans up, but our new report 'Selling Out Nigeria – Shell's irresponsible divestment' released today shows how historical pollution remains a serious issue and how Shell is trying to avoid responsibility for this despite the billions of dollars it has earned from the oil. The certification process Shell uses to claim it has cleaned up oil spill sites is 'deeply flawed and cannot be relied upon'.

While Shell has long maintained that theft of oil and interference with pipelines are the causes of much of the oil pollution – claims that are strongly contested – this has no bearing on its responsibility to clean up. Under Nigerian law, Shell must clean up oil spills no matter the cause. It has failed to do so. The long-term oil pollution is bad enough, but the situation is likely to worsen in the years to come with a massive unpaid bill for safely decommissioning old and dilapidated oil infrastructure. Scattered across the landscape of the Niger Delta are abandoned pipelines, well heads and other oil infrastructure that are a disaster waiting to happen. All of Nigeria's oil infrastructure will ultimately have to be safely decommissioned, but the investigation by SOMO shows that Shell has divested to many newly created companies that do not appear to have the funds or willingness to do this.

There is a massive transparency gap around the issue of funding for decommissioning. Nigeria has legal requirements for companies to set aside funds for decommissioning, but there is no means to establish how much funding companies have – or have not – set aside. Available indicators are worrying – researchers could not find any confirmation that Shell has set up a fund or funds to cover the decommissioning of the oil mining leases (OMLs) it has sold. Shell has pulled off the ultimate Houdini act. As the oil industry enters its final phase, whether that's in the next 5 years or 25, Shell has sold its toxic assets and will not be left holding them when the music stops. Shell has profited from oil extraction for decades and in doing so, has made the Niger Delta one of the most oil-polluted places on earth, leaving communities to face the dire consequences that will remain well beyond the lifetime of the industry.

Shell is not the only international oil company exiting the onshore Niger Delta. All of the European and US oil majors are also leaving. However, the departure of Shell, which has been the dominant operator with the largest footprint in the region for decades, impacts significant areas of the Delta and thousands of communities. Shell must not be allowed to simply walk away from this most emblematic of unjust energy transition cases. Ensuring that the historical pollution, the lack of funding for safe decommissioning and poor financial transparency are fully addressed in Nigeria will be an important litmus test for a just energy transition across the world. Despite claiming to divest responsibly and claiming it conducted due diligence on the new buyers (most of which are Nigerian oil companies), the report exposes how Shell has sold to newly created companies that have – in some cases – little real substance, opaque backgrounds or involve complex groups of domestic and foreign investors.

It can be deduced that some of the new companies appear to be crude investment exercises, backed by investors who appear to have no interest in the situation of the Niger Delta and only in making as much money as possible while they can. Some of the companies that bought the oil assets seem to have set themselves up to extract Nigeria's last remaining oil wealth and are likely to simply fade away when oil ceases to be profitable. Our report also found that while Shell has offloaded its problem assets, it is still involved financially in some of the new operations. Shell has loaned funds to several of the new companies or will buy the oil they produce. The links are not only financial. In announcing the sale of its wholly-owned Nigerian subsidiary, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), Shell has said it will retain a role in supporting the management of SPDC Joint

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Venture facilities that supply a major portion of the feed gas to Nigeria LNG (NLNG). Shell holds a 25.6 per cent interest in NLNG.

The international oil companies are divesting at an accelerated rate – and the report highlights that the process is inadequate. There will be no 'just energy transition' under this regime. In response to the growing concerns about how international oil companies are divesting from the onshore Niger Delta, civil society organisations in the region, including Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN), have formulated new principles for responsible oil and gas industry divestment, which they hope the Nigerian Government will adopt and implement. The principles would help ensure a transparent process to assess the capacity of the incoming companies, with meaningful community consultation throughout, address environmental pollution, and deteriorating and abandoned infrastructure.

The Niger Delta area of Nigeria is a densely populated region sitting directly on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean where the Niger River divides into several tributaries. The region extends along the coast from Benin River on the west to the Imo River on the east. This area has a massive amount of crude oil deposits such that exploration, exploitation and production with industrial installations like pipeline materials, flow stations, gas clusters and gas flaring sites are in place. The region is seen as Africa's most important oil producing region. The region is undoubtedly the most attractive region for investment in Nigeria. It is full of life and natural resources with diverse culture and heritage. It is the driving force behind the economic growth in Nigeria. The economy depends on natural resources such as crude oil. It lies under the earth crust and while in this state, it does not have any economic value until it is discovered, drilled and brought to the surface. Crude oil is a naturally occurring petroleum product which is composed of hydrocarbon and other organic materials, this crude when explored and through other anthropogenic means, may spill into the environment (Tobor, John Oghenero and Muzorewa, Wilson, 2016).

The Environmental Pollution Center defined oil spills as any spill of crude oil or oil distilled products (gasoline, diesel fuels, jet fuels, kerosene, Stoddard solvent, hydraulic oils, and lubricating oil) that can alter the concentration of the chemical component of the surface of the land, air, and water environment. Literature revealed that chemicals released into the environment in the past had possibly resulted to the changes, alterations or disturbance to the environment perceived to be deleterious or undesirable (Tattersall, 2010). Anthropogenic activities may result to the deposition of crude petroleum products into nearby rivers and its combustion pollutes the air with significant health risks. This process leads to oil spill pollution.

Oil spill pollution refers to the negative contamination or impact on the environments and living organisms, including humans, due to the discharge into the environment of various organic compounds that make up crude oil and oil distillate products, the majority of which include various hydrocarbons and other chemical components.

Some of the constituents are heteroatom compounds, metals, organic and inorganic compounds. Hydrocarbons are made exclusively from carbon and hydrogen atoms which bind together in various ways, resulting in paraffin's (normal alkanes), isoparaffins (isoalkanes), aromatics (such as benzene or various PAHs), cycloalkanes and unsaturated alkanes (alkenes and alkynes). The Niger Delta environment in Nigeria had witnessed the traffic of this petroleum crude into her vegetation's including both swamp and land locations where oil exploration occurs. The process where crude oil and other hydrocarbon are spilled into the environment either intentionally or unintentionally, had led to environmental degradation in the region. This study owes its significance to the facts that the Niger Delta region is made up of rivers, lakes, coastal lagoons, mangroves, peat lands, coral reefs and other land locations. Oil exploration in this region is managed by the joint venture (JV) companies who collectively control about 95% of Nigeria's crude oil production, leaving the balance to indigenous companies operating some marginal oil fields.

Perhaps it was against this background that the Ogoni Bill of Rights (1990)1 demanded environmental clean-up, resource control, and significant level of political autonomy, and the Kiama Declaration (1998) decried the environmental waste that the Niger Delta has become and feared for its future. The Ogoni position seems to have been vindicated by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) Report which was published in August

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2011 and its review published in May 2012. The scientific assessment, which examined more than 200 locations, surveyed 122 km of pipeline rights of way, reviewed more than 5,000 medical records, had meetings with thousands of people, and analyzed more than 400 samples including water from 142 groundwater wells and 780 boreholes, indicated that oil firms had contaminated no fewer than 1,000 km2 of Ogoniland (Nwinedum 2012).

These conditions, which represent what most Niger Delta communities have suffered for over five decades, had led to disaffection resulting in errant violent movements, hostage taking of foreign and local oil workers, seizure and vandalization of oil installations, sea piracy and bunkering, agitation for resources control and political autonomy, and communal clashes. All these activities, though no longer in frenzied situations due to some palliative measures such as the amnesty program and the activities of some government agencies, could be attributed to environmental neglect and absence of eco-justice in the formulation and implementation of policies that govern the oil and gas industry. The lethargy in the implementation of the UNEP recommendations on the cleaning of the Ogoni environment further lends credence to this UNEP (2011).

Three arguments may be deduced from the statement. First is the fact that the discovery of crude, which ought to have been a blessing to the people became a curse, given the decades of environmental degradation the people have come to experience. Second, the people have lost countless lives as a result of the repressive measures meted to them whenever they put up both peaceful and violent agitations in their demands for justice. Third, a series of politicking have characterized the issues of justice and to date, very little improvement could be seen across Ogoniland as regards the plethora of challenges that have confronted the people. Ogoniland – comprising the present-day Eleme, Khana, Gokana and Tai local government areas – in Rivers State has been the focus of many debates in terms of ecological injustices, especially since 1993, when the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) began to raise concerns of the devastating impacts of crude oil exploration in Ogoni (http://www.mosop.org/; Senewo, 2015).

Prior to this time, Ogoniland had gained prominence in the Nigeria crude oil economy after a large deposit of crude oil was found zin 1957 by the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) (Nwilo and Badejo, 2008). Since then, over a 100 billion barrels of oil have been reportedly explored from the Ogoni region. Despite these massive contributions towards the oil economy in Nigeria, the people of Ogoni, it has been reported, are yet to receive a commensurate level of environmental justice on the massive destruction of their land due to the oil exploration that has been conducted ever since. Such destructions due to oil spills have become a recurring decimal in the area. For instance, in 1970, there was a report of a massive oil spill that destroyed not only the flora of the region but went on to affect both fauna and human lives (Vaughan, 2011). This spill was said to have led to a £26 million fine for Shell in Nigeria courts 30 years later (Vaughan, 2011; Vidal, 2011).

However, the population of this region has become a contentious issue when the Obasanjo administration decided to group all southern Nigerian States that produce oil as part of the Niger Delta (Focus group discussion with community representatives, NGO representatives, and Government officials in Bayelsa State, July 2009). Therefore, according to the 2006 Census by the National Bureau of Statistics, the Niger Delta has an approximate population of 31 million (Amnesty International [AI], 2009). As with many other developing nations, Nigeria continues to have leadership that is detrimental to society. Specifically, the Niger Delta region has dealt with decades of endemic violence because of oil production in the area, which has also destroyed the environment without proper compensation to the local communities.

The Gbemre case was the first Nigerian judicial decision where the court adopted ‘constitutional human rights approach to environmental protection with respect to climate unfriendly activities in the oil and gas sector’. In its decision, the court alluded to and reiterated the plaintiffs’ claims in their affidavit that ‘gas flaring leads to the emission of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas’ and ‘contributes to adverse climate change’. From the distributive dimension of the climate justice paradigm, Gbemre shows how the negative consequences of climate change has more adverse impacts on the already poor and vulnerable in the Niger Delta. For example, uneven consequences of gas flaring are faced by the Niger Delta people, and most of the flare sites are located close to the oil-producing communities, and away from the more prosperous parts of the country. Thus, the environmental (and climate) injustices as exemplified by gas flares are unevenly distributed in Nigeria to the detriment of already vulnerable members of society (especially those living in the Niger Delta).

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This judgment has been criticized and has not been enforced, so it has not had any impacts.[138] However, despite this, in 2021 SPDC instituted an appeal at the Court of Appeal against the decision in Gbemre. The appeal was heard on 18 January 2023. This appeal will arguably create an opportunity for the Nigerian judiciary to provide more clarity on the implications of the Gbemre case for environmental justice (including climate justice) in the country. At the time of writing, a decision is still awaited.

However, some scholars have questioned whether Gbemre is a climate case. For example, Bouwer suggests that that the extent to which Gbemre is more of a climate case than other litigation against MNCs in Nigeria is questionable, because the judge just mentions climate change in passing. Thus, it is not any more material to the reasoning than in other case filed against oil MNCs in Nigeria. The argument of this chapter is that the climate change identity of Gbemre is better understood because of the closeness or connection between climate justice and environmental justice in this context. Furthermore, the large amount of litigation or cases filed against oil MNCs in Nigeria has to some extent improved the business activities of MNCs. Arguably, Gbemre alone did not do much to improve climate justice in Nigeria, but it is recognized as a climate change case. Also, the utility or relevance of Gbemre can be juxtaposed with less well-known local litigation (in Nigeria) that has done a lot more to improve conditions in the Niger Delta (Rumpf, 2022).

Prior to the recent decision of the Supreme Court in Centre for Oil Pollution Watch v Nigerian National Petroleum Corpn, NGO involvement in public interest litigation in Nigeria was seriously hindered by the doctrine of locus stand*i*. Nigerian courts were reluctant to rule that NGOs had the requisite legal standing to institute court cases especially in human rights and environmental issues. However, in COPW, some of the justices in explicitly referred to sections 20 and 30 of the Nigerian Constitution, section 17(4) of the Oil Pipelines Act and article 24 of the African Charter to hold that the right to a clean and healthy environment is recognized under Nigerian law. The Supreme Court held that environmental NGOs have the locus standi (legal standing) to institute environmental cases in Nigeria. This case has liberalized the locus standi of NGOs in environmental matters in Nigeria, thereby improving access to environmental justice and promoting sustainable development for those wishing to bring action to protect the environment in Nigeria.

The COPW case has implications for climate change litigation in Nigeria and, as such, the promotion of climate justice. Arguably, the COPW case promotes the three dimensions of environmental justice and climate justice – distributive, procedural and recognition. For example, the court stated:

every person, including NGOs, who bona fide seek in the law court the due performance of statutory provisions or public laws, especially laws designed to protect human lives, public health and the environment, should be regarded as proper persons clothed with in law to request adjudication on such issues of public nuisance that are injurious to human lives, public health and environment.

Arguably, this can be applied to climate action in Nigerian courts. Furthermore, from a distributive justice dimension, one possible implication of the COPW case is that oil communities and individuals suffering from the negative impacts of the activities of oil MNCs will be able sue such companies successfully notwithstanding the lack of explicit environmental rights provisions in the Nigerian Constitution. Thus, this might act as a restriction on the oil companies engaging in egregious activities that will worsen environmental injustices in Nigeria. From a procedural justice dimension, COPW arguably improves or enhances access to environmental justice (including climate justice) in Nigeria for individuals, communities and environmental injustice victims. For example, NGOs can now sue on behalf of communities or individuals in environmental justice litigation.

Many environmental injustice victims in the Niger Delta are poor and do not have the financial resources and technical expertise to take on oil companies in Nigeria. Thus, the broadening of the legal standing of environmental NGOs will enable NGOs (acting in the public good via public interest litigation) to sue on behalf of environmental injustice victims. With proper engagement, this will improve the participation of individuals and communities in environmental justice in Nigeria. Environmental public interest litigation takes more prominence in Nigeria because many of the government agencies that are responsible for environmental protection and remediation do not live up to that legal responsibility. Thus, litigation by public-spirited

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individuals and NGOs or pressure groups can be a strategy to ensure that governmental agencies live up to their environmental protection responsibility in Nigeria.

From a recognition justice dimension, everyone in Nigeria (and not just the government and MNCs) by virtue of the COPW case is now seen as a relevant stakeholder in the promotion of environmental justice in the country. The court stated that no specific person or individual owns the environment, and the 'environment is a public good'. Thus, arguably by virtue of COPW, every Nigerian (including public-spirited taxpayers and NGOs) are recognized stakeholders in environmental justice (including climate justice) promotion in Nigeria. The Supreme Court in COPW specifically referred to climate-related issues and used climate-related terminologies in the judgment. According to Etemire, this 'serves as a clear indication by the apex court of the challenges of climate change and global warming, and the fact that the courts have a key role to play in tackling these challenges for the benefit of present and future generations'. Thus, the Supreme Court is currently in tune with matters relating to climate change. Furthermore, Oamen and Erhagbe suggest that the decision has undoubtedly improved the prospects of climate litigation in Nigeria. For example, NGOs are no longer constrained by rigid rules of standing in environmental adjudication in Nigeria. Hence, based on the COPW case, NGOs, climate injustice victims, individuals, and communities, can institute cases in Nigeria to ventilate their rights in climate-related environmental justice cases, or more direct climate litigation (Riley, 2023).

Another innovation from the COPW case is that the Supreme Court recognized that courts in Nigeria – under sections 16 (2), 17 (2)(d)(3), and 20 of the 1999 Constitution, section 17(4) of the Oil Pipelines Act and the Oil and Gas Regulations – are 'under a duty to protect the environment, in appropriate cases, and would fail in that duty if they do not facilitate the protection these laws have put in place'. This has implications for climate litigation jurisprudence in Nigeria, and this is arguably a clear directive from the apex court to the relevant stakeholders in environmental protection regime in the country. Taking this approach will allow' the existing human rights provisions of the Constitution and existing laws to be used as means for enforcing climate justice in Nigeria (Riley, 2023). As argued by Raval, & Munshi, (2021), the view of this chapter is that the jurisprudence of the two cases (Gbemre and COPW) analysed is paving the way for improved environmental and climate justice in Nigeria. The cases 'are noteworthy for recognizing the right to a clean and healthy environment and for establishing a range of qualitative human rights standards that Nigeria must observe in order to protect her citizens. Such elaborate human rights standards can be extended to climate change issues/litigation'.

Ecological and Environmental Justice

Eco-justice, as a concept, could be traced to the concern of a group of North American ecumenically-engaged Christian ethicists who in the 1970s after the first Earth Day were burdened with the lack of adequate principles of social ethics to address the environmental challenges of society. By 1973, a strategy to advance integrative ethics of ecology and justice became the focus of an ecumenical campus ministry initiative at Cornell University called the Eco-Justice Project and Network (EJPN). Its leading proponent was social ethicist (Billon, 2021). In his words:

eco-justice is defined as: the well-being of humankind on a thriving earth, … an earth productive of sufficient food, with water fit for all to drink, air fit to breathe, forests kept replenished, renewable resources continuously renewed, nonrenewable resources used as sparingly as possible so that they will be available [to future generations] for their most important uses…. On a thriving earth, providing sustainable sufficiency for all, human well-being is nurtured not only by the provision of these material necessities but also by a way of living within the natural order that is fitting: respectful of the integrity of natural systems and of the worth of nonhuman creatures, appreciative of the beauty and mystery of the world of nature (19-21).

In the words of Bullard, "environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies" (2005). Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socio-economic groups, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies. This implies that all human entitled to equal protection

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and equal enforcement of our environmental, land use … energy, laws, and regulations (Varvastian & Kalunga 2020).

Further on this, it is observed that the simple provision of environmental justice: to succeeding generations lays in the acknowledgment that they those who follow us will need the capital resource systems upon which we all rely. Simple justice to contemporary strangers likewise means acknowledging that they need capital resources on which we all rely. It is incumbent upon us to preserve those systems because we know they will be needed. Simple equity demands that we show the same degree of care to contemporary strangers as we hope to show to future beings (Robert Collin and Robin Collin 2001).

Similarly, they opine: One primary characteristic of an environmental justice issue is that the consequences of environmental decisions are inescapable for those adversely affected. While certain decisions have had an immediate consequence for exploited people in exploited lands, it is now dawning on the more privileged culture that some of their environmental privileges have come at a cost to others. The concept of sustainability helps to foster understanding of environmental consequences. Another motivating factor is the sober judge of all our actions, the environment itself. Our populations are increasing, our communities are growing, we are using resources rapidly, waste is dramatically increasing with fewer places to put it, and cities are ignored (Varvastian & Kalunga (2020).

At least four norms have been identified as the guiding principles of eco-justice. These norms, according to Hessel (2007), could be summarized as follows:

(1) "solidarity with other people and creatures—companions, victims, and allies—in earth community, reflecting deep respect for diverse creation";

(2) "ecological sustainability—environmentally fitting habits of living and working that enable life to flourish, and utilize ecologically and socially appropriate technology";

(3) "sufficiency as a standard of organized sharing, which requires basic floors and definite ceilings for equitable or 'fair' consumption";

(4) "socially just participation in decisions about how to obtain sustenance and to manage community life for the good in common and the good of the commons."

Of these four, the first, second, and last could apply to our nature of study the exploration and exploitation of natural resources such as oil and gas. For instance, the solidarity norm focuses on the full extent of the earth community and inter-human obligation. Sustainability gives high visibility to ecological integrity and wise behaviour throughout the resource-use cycle. The fourth implies the active participation of communities endowed with such resources in policy evolvement and implementation. Thus, it could be summed from the foregone discussion that eco-justice shows concern for:

(i) the right and judicious use of the environment and its natural resources;

(ii) the adequate provision for the sustenance of the human society;

(iii) the safeguarding of the health and well-being of present human population by the protection of biodiversity and ecological systems; and

(iv) the intentional efforts to preserve the environment for the sustenance, good health, and well-being of future generations.

These concerns thus lead to social responsibility and ethical considerations in the use of the environment. In other words, eco-justice calls for decision-making that incorporates social, economic, cultural, and environmental concerns and issues in the quest for humankind to appropriate to itself the abundant resources that nature provides. Understanding of Environmental Justice is generally context-specific; as such, it means different things to different people. It is, therefore, arguable whether there is a single definition that completely captures the various dimensions of Environmental Justice. In the US, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) views Environmental Justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people

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regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

It has been argued that the USEPA's definition was influenced by the unfair concentration of facilities that generated environmental harms in marginalized communities. Issues of race, discrimination and inequality were the dominant determinants in the allocation of environmental harms and goods; as such, USEPA's definition was geared towards acknowledging and addressing these core influencers of environmental injustices. The Scottish government defines Environmental Justice as the "concern that no social group, especially if already deprived in other socio-economic respects, should suffer a disproportionate burden of negative environmental impacts; [and also] the…concern that all communities should have access to the information and mechanisms to allow them to participate fully in decisions affecting their environment" (Abubakar, 2022).

This definition seems to place emphasis on both distributional and procedural components of Environmental Justice. This is deliberate because the recurring theme in environmental injustices in Scotland is poverty, as such, "the Scottish definition is more concerned with protecting 'deprived communities.' However, the Scottish definition seems inadequate because it is 2-dimensional – focusing only on the distributive and procedural approach to Environmental Justice. As would be seen in the segment below on the components of Environmental Justice, there seem to be more than 2 dimensions of Environmental Justice. In the UK, Environmental Justice is officially conceptualized by the government thus: Everyone should share in the benefits of increased prosperity and a clean and safe environment. We have to improve access to services, tackle social exclusion, and reduce the harm to health caused by poverty, poor housing, unemployment and pollution. Our needs must not be met by treating others, including future generations and people elsewhere in the world, unfairly. Income disparity is the primary driver of inequality in the UK and the definition of Environmental Justice is intended to address that. However, on a comparative note, the UK's definition seems wider than the Scottish because it incorporates many dimensions of Environmental Justice and related concepts including distribution, right to a healthy environment, participation, social justice and intergenerational equity. In South America, because of the history of colonization and its attendant impact, Environmental Justice is seen from the lens of decolonization, (World Bank. 2021).

As such, from a "decolonial perspective, Environmental Justice entails developing a politics of difference that is not simply based on the search for recognition or inclusion in dominant structures, such as the liberal nation-state or global economic systems, but focused rather on the construction of 'otherness. In Africa, Okonkwo (2020) notes that Environmental Justice principles have been included in section 24 (right to a healthy environment), 26 (right to housing) and 27 (right to health care, food, water and social security) of the South African 1996 Constitution and that this should serve as a template for Nigeria. These provisions would be useful in Nigeria because they could promote Environmental Justice in the Niger Delta, (Adekoya, 2021).

However, a non-governmental organization - the South African Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF) defines Environmental Justice thus: Environmental justice is about social transformation directed towards meeting basic human needs and enhancing our quality of life – economic quality, health care, housing, human rights, environmental protection, and democracy. In linking environmental and social justice issues the environmental justice approach seeks to challenge the abuse of power which results in poor people having to suffer the effects of environmental damage caused by the greed of others. This definition reflects the aspirations of a post-apartheid South Africa by incorporating social justice, discrimination and addressing abuse of power, (Obuche, 2016).

There is a plethora of definitions or connotations of climate justice; there is no universally accepted definition. For example, climate justice is premised on the need for international law to protect the rights of the most vulnerable from the unequal negative impacts of climate change. However, this chapter favours the definition of climate (change) justice as proffered by the Task Force on Climate Change Justice and Human Rights of the International Bar Association (the IBA Task Force). The IBA Task Force (2019:115-118) defines climate justice as follows:

To ensure communities, individuals and governments have substantive legal and procedural rights relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the means to take or cause measures to be

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taken within their national legislative and judicial systems and, where necessary, at regional and international levels, to mitigate sources of climate change and provide for adaptation to its effects in a manner that respects human rights.

Thus, climate justice is a concept or framework that acknowledges that climate change will unduly affect people or communities who are less capable in preventing, adapting or being able to respond to its negative impacts, such as the now common extreme weather occurrences, rising sea levels and new resource limitations. In essence, climate justice embeds the explicit recognition of the development inequities accentuated by climate change Bassey, (2018).

Biukeme (2021), Climate justice is an offshoot of environmental justice, and environmental justice is also a movement and concept. For example, there is close connection between the struggles for environmental justice and climate justice in the Niger Delta. Thus, there is an explicit link between the grassroots struggles of people suffering from pollution to broader concerns about the climate change impact of MNCs – mostly because of the same conduct by the same MNCs. They pollute locally, and globally, with the effects being felt even more locally due to vulnerabilities in the Niger Delta. Hence, notable environmental justice NGOs such as the Environmental Rights Action (ERA) has been at the forefront of promoting climate justice action in Nigeria (Biukeme, 2021).

Bousso (2019), Environmental justice has an indelible impact on how climate justice has been conceptualized and developed as a scholarly construct. On the other hand, Edwards suggests that 'climate justice' as an idea or a concept emerged concurrently in scholarly circles and civil society when climate change issues rose to prominence and public consciousness in the 1990s. Like environmental justice, climate justice is rooted in anti-establishment social movements. Schlosberg and Collins suggests that one of the conceptualizations of climate justice is that it is rooted in grassroots movements (Brant, 1995). At the international level, climate justice is also a transnational movement encompassing a coalition of groups that mobilized during successive climate change conferences. This is exemplified in the development of the Bali Principles of Climate Justice, which, according to Gonzalez, is 'the first major articulation of the idea of climate justice by a transnational social movement'.

Notwithstanding that the concepts of climate justice and environmental justice originated as theories in the Global North, this terminology has diffused to other parts of the world. In the Global South, climate justice has become a popular mobilizing narrative used by various stakeholders to formulate strategies to hold different actors (including government and non-state actors) accountable for their actions, omissions and commitments under various climate change frameworks (both domestic and global) (Brant, 1995). Arguably, the character of climate justice might be distinct in the Global South. For example, Pezzullo (2020) suggests that in some parts of the Global South climate justice is characterized by reliance on ancient or indigenous knowledge and already existing environmental justice mobilization movements. Hence, some scholars and activists suggest that Global South and Global North countries contributed equally to the development of environmental justice and climate justice paradigms (Carlin, 2021).

Akin to environmental justice, which is underpinned by distributional, procedural and recognition justice dimensions, among others; climate justice is also underpinned by similar justice dimensions. Therefore, the three recurrent themes of environmental justice (and climate justice) consist of distributive, procedural and recognition elements and these are sometimes referred to as the 'three concepts of justice'. Also, the IPCC, via its Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group III in a report in 2022, states that the climate justice concept consists of distributional, procedural and recognition principles (Pessitelli, 2014).

The distributional dimension of climate justice focuses on the 'fair distribution of costs and burdens of climate change and the societal responses to climate change'. In many parts of the world, people are not protected equally from the vagaries of climate change and the most vulnerable in society tend to bear the worst effects of climate change. This means that poorer countries suffer disproportionately and that more vulnerable communities within both less and relatively affluent nations experience or are subject to environmental and climate injustice. One conceptualization of this distributive dimension is via the North/South divide. Gonzalez and Atapattu (2018) have noted that:

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developed countries are responsible for climate change damage, 'accounting for seventy-four per cent of global economic activity since 1950, though such nations comprise only eighteen per cent of the planet's population'(190-191).

Notwithstanding their lesser contribution to climate change, several countries and marginalized societies or communities in the Global South bear an unequal share of the negative impacts of climate change due to their vulnerable physical locations and inadequate resources for climate change actions (Climate Change, 2022).

In the Global North, (for example, in the United States), ethnic minorities and poorer people in society, who are already facing environmental injustices, bear the worst of climate change. In the Global South, already vulnerable communities and individuals face the brunt of environmental injustices exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. The Niger Delta is said to be among the least developed parts of Nigeria, and has a high incidence of poverty and inadequate infrastructure or amenities. Due to the more than six decades of oil exploration production activities, the Niger Delta is also one of the areas in Nigeria most impacted by climate change and the industries that cause it, especially with the rise in global warming and the impacts of gas flaring and allied activities. Unless concerted efforts are made by the relevant stakeholders to develop climate actions, the Niger Delta will continue to bear the brunt of the negative impacts of climate change and the industries that have caused it (Collin, Robert & Robin, 2019).

Another dimension of climate justice is procedural justice, 'which refers to whether and how the groups most affected by climate change have meaningful opportunities to participate in brainstorming, designing, and implementing climate responses. In Nigeria, very few laws encourage public participation and consultation in environmental and climate-based issues. Furthermore, there is a plethora of challenges associated with procedural justice in Nigeria (especially in oil and gas, where the bulk of environmental injustices take place), including the limited resources of litigants and delays in judicial proceedings, among others. These factors have hampered access to environmental justice in Nigeria and arguably will also have negative impacts on climate justice. Fortunately, activists, NGOs (local and foreign), oil communities, individuals and other relevant stakeholders have relied on national, sub-regional and regional litigation to improve access to environmental justice in Nigeria, and this has implications for climate justice in Nigeria. Litigation is one of the strategies that can be used to enhance the procedural justice dimension of climate justice (Comyns, 2018).

The next dimension of climate justice is recognitional justice. Chu and Michael, relying on Miranda Fricker's work, define recognitional justice as the 'explicit forms of unfair treatment of experiences, understandings, and participation in communicative or decision-making practices'. Many relevant actors or stakeholders from different social groups are not always recognized as legitimate actors, whose awareness of the problems and interests (or priorities) 'should inform the design and implementation of policies and programs'. Furthermore, some marginalized or vulnerable groups can also be misrecognized which, according to Fraser, is how some policies or actions lead to the situation whereby relevant stakeholders are seen as 'less than full members of society' and prevented from participating as equals Watts. (2015).

One of the major causes of the intractable conflicts in Niger Delta is the lack of recognition and participation of the people of the Niger Delta in the governance framework. Thus, laws that encourage public participation and consultation with the people in environmental and climate-based issues should be enacted in Nigeria. In the context of the Niger Delta, oil-producing or host communities should be recognized by the government and MNCs as important stakeholders in environmental governance. However, it should be noted that reliance on justice principles in the climate justice paradigm has been criticized by some scholars. One reason given is that the emphasis on justice diminishes rather than enhances climate policy and regulation. Furthermore, the notion of justice or injustice can be subject to different understandings and interpretations. The concept of climate justice is also understood and subject to a wide range of understandings (and interpretations) in its usage, and this is said to be one of its major weaknesses (Dung, Bombom, and Agusomu, 2018).

Another major criticism is that the concept or principles of climate justice have already been integrated partially in the current climate change regime. This is exemplified by the implicit recognition of climate justice in the preamble to the Paris Agreement. This does not mean that climate justice has been achieved. A major weakness

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of the inclusion of the concept of climate justice (including human rights) in the Paris Agreement is that the preamble is not enforceable. Some of the global mechanisms promoting climate justice remain generally out of the reach of many of the individuals who are seeking or pursuing climate justice (Eboh, 2016).

This is evident in the following remarks: Given the care they [oil companies] take to protect the environment in their home countries, the devastation of the Niger Delta is a conscious policy on their part for several reasons. One, there is a colonial mentality that a third-world environment does not deserve good care. This attitude means that the oil companies do not have any sense of responsibility towards Nigeria or any other third-world country for that matter. All they care is to exploit the resources (Ekoriko 1997). In a dispatch addressed to the World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa, Olukoya (2001) quoted Teresa Turner as saying that the oppressive environmental practices perpetrated by Western oil companies in Nigeria amounted to environmental racism and could not be pursued by them in the Northern hemisphere. She also reportedly accused the oil companies of using creative but deceptive public relations tactics to blind the West from seeing their anti-community and anti-environment practices in the Niger Delta and thus forcing that region to continue to consume oil that was in every sense 'mixed with blood'.

The above remarks, while understandable from the standpoint of the long history of ideological conflict between the global north and the global south, nonetheless, go against the grain of what has long been known as the 'logic of capital' - the fact that private companies are about profits. Many corporations have been known to resort to 'irresponsible' practices (bending accounting rules, exploiting societal ignorance, taking advantage of lax or nonexistent legislation, or even compromising a corruptible and weak bureaucracy) just to achieve corporate financial aims. This does not have to be a 'white black', 'North-South' issue, as companies (even those operating in home soils) hardly of their accord act to 'protect' the environment – except of course such 'protection' is in their immediate or long-term economic interest (Eboh, 2016).

This is not to imply that companies are absolved from responsibility, but the reality is that they often exploit existing loopholes in a particular society to further their aims. It is the primary responsibility of government to (through appropriate legislation, scrupulous enforcement of relevant laws, and, above all, a transparent determination to put people first) force companies to not only act in the public interest but also get used to acting that way. To assume, therefore, that the Niger Delta's resistance is fundamentally a resistance against corporate double standards is to oversimplify the issue and divert attention away from other important explanations as to why the oil companies behave the way they do in Nigeria (Ejobowah, 2010).

Allegations of 'racially motivated double standards' have led some writers to advocate a transfer of oil production technology to Nigerians as a way of heralding a new era of community- and environment-friendly oil operations in the country. Indeed, Abe and Ayodele's (1986:95) conviction is that '[a]s long as aliens control the technology of oil production, equipment, etc. so shall our environmental problems arising therefrom remain with us' – which is quite a grim picture, especially since it does not seem Nigeria is wresting 'control' of this technology from the 'aliens' anytime soon. Indeed, if there is anything to learn from the resurgent oil exploration frenzy in countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Kenya, Chad, Sudan, Niger – and in Nigeria's north-eastern sector – it is that the ruling elites of most present and potential oil-rich African countries are more interested in easy incomes from oil than in the acquisition of oil production technology. But it is probably in Agbola and Alabi (2003) that one finds one of the most dramatic applications of environmental justice narrative to the Niger Delta resistance.

It is encapsulated in the concepts of 'selective victimization' and 'peripheralization'. One considers it dramatic in the sense that it gives the concept of environmental racism a local ambience, by connecting it to the well-worn 'ethnic' narrative briefly reviewed earlier. The writers make a determined effort to document the social and environmental woes of the Niger Delta, even acknowledging that they are 'linked directly to the unsustainable mode of petroleum resources extraction in Nigeria' and to state 'policies and actions. But rather than make 'mode of extraction' as well as 'state policies and actions' – or indeed what Transparency International (2004) calls 'political corruption' - a central issue in their analysis, what one finds are strong, unsustainable inter-ethnic comparisons: With selective victimization, the Niger Delta region is losing critical resources as well as a healthy

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environment, thereby exposing residents to hazardous environmental conditions, while the non-oil producing which receive the lion's share of the oil revenue are free to live in a healthy setting (Agbola and Alabi 2003).

According to former U.S. Congressman John Lewis (1994), 'reaching the goal of environmental justice would require action on the part of the federal government. (The goal) could best be achieved through federal legislation. If the problem is with the oil production framework – in other words, with the 'background institutions' that define the boundaries of state and corporate commitment to the community and the environment - then the concept of 'selective victimization' is simply gratuitous. Environmental justice discourse makes sense in the Nigerian context if it emphasizes the need for communities to, by law, play an active and non-subordinate role – alongside government and other stakeholders – in determining how environmental resources are exploited and utilized.

Such a paradigm emphasizes the imperative of accountability, which, helped along by strong and transparent public institutions, ensures that in the quest for development through natural resource exploitation, the very principles of human welfare and the common good are not undermined. The ethos of governance must also be a central concern if one is to differentiate between predatory socio-political governance and deliberate victimization. Granted, decades of oil production, amidst permissive environmental controls, can be likened to an ecologic rape. But nowhere in Nigeria does one find a scrupulous, people-centred environmental regime capable of creating the sort of 'healthy setting' romanticized by proponents of selective victimization. The rot is evident in the north, south, east and west. Lagos, Nigeria's congested and chaotic 'commercial and industrial capital', for example, is characterized by collapsed social infrastructure and has remained for many years one of the world's dirtiest cities.

Abuja, the only 'planned' city in the country, now appears caught in the contradictions of its status as Nigeria's seat of government: the scramble for building sites and sundry business spaces (amidst inept urban management and poor infrastructure) has made Abuja one of the world's fastest decaying newly-built cities. In the far-northern sector - Nigeria's 'dry belt' - government effort to combat desertification has traditionally been in the form of a dubious once-a year tree-planting ritual by bureaucrats and politicians, the result being that about fifty per cent of a state like Yobe has already been lost under the Sahara desert (Raufu 2004). In the Western Nigerian traditional capital city of Ibadan, residents of a particular neighborhood have once been reported as falling tipsy after drinking well water that had been contaminated underground by effluents from a nearby beer factory. In recent years, the Kainji Dam5 has become notorious for unleashing its contents on its host communities (spread across Niger, Kogi and Kwara States), causing floods that have devastated homes and farmlands.

Indeed, communal agonies resulting from dam failures have given rise to a Niger Delta-like coalition and resistance, under the aegis of Hydroelectric Power Producing Communities (HYPPADEC). In none of these cases have there yet been effective and popularly accepted remedial measures (reparation, resettlement, and compensation for property lost or damaged) from the government or the private and public enterprises concerned. While environmental problems in the non-oil producing areas may pale in significance when compared to gas flaring, oil spills (which destroy forests, farmlands and fishing grounds) and underground water pollution in the Niger Delta, there is at least one string that binds them all in the same pack: the absence of effective response and remedial mechanisms. At the very least, it does suggest that while there is considerable environmental damage in the Niger Delta, other regions of Nigeria are not necessarily sparkling with virginal splendor, or cuddled like precious jewels by the Nigerian government. The Niger Delta is probably only a hyperbolic case of how the Nigerian state treats its citizens. This point should serve to highlight the emancipatory significance of the Niger Delta struggle – the fact that, in a very practical sense, it does represent what Shils (1992:1-15) would call a 'solicitation for the interest of the whole society'.

In construing Environmental Justice this way, EJNF seeks to inspire equitable allocation of environmental consequences and questions social issues and the misuse of power "which renders the vulnerable [members of the lower class] to environmental destruction. It challenges the social, political and economic inequalities that make people of a particular class (usually the lower class) suffer the negative impacts of environmental degradation caused by the avaricious-driven behaviours and attitudes of others (usually the wealthy)." However, it seems that the definition by EJNF does not have continent-wide applicability since, as would be seen below,

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experts have identified other elements of Environmental Justice in other parts of Africa that are not captured in EJNF's definition. Because of the peculiar environmental challenges faced in Africa apart from South Africa, Environmental Justice in a broader African context should consider these other dimensions of environmental harms suffered by a wide range of Africans, (Adigun and Jegede, 2023).

In Africa where resource exploitation by the TNCs leaves in its wake deprivation, human rights abuses, corruption, and environmental degradation, coupled with the government's failure to provide social services and remedial mechanisms like accessible justice machinery and systems and infrastructure, Environmental Justice should ensure "equitable distribution of environmental amenities, the rectification and retribution of environmental abuses, the restoration of nature, and the fair exchange of resources…[and] as a movement to rein in and subject corporate and bureaucratic decision making, as well as relevant market processes, to democratic scrutiny and accountability." Also, land ownership and concomitant rights of access to natural resources are central to African communities. As such, any definition of Environmental Justice in Africa should include access to land and natural resources.

Ako (2021) puts it this way, unlike the global North where land is primarily an economic resource, land is an integral part of peoples' heritage; it links the individual to the community, is the basis of ancestry and binds the community. In other words, environmental justice in Africa…is not simply about democratic participation in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens (Afinotan, 2022).

It is more fundamental; it is about participating in defending the essence of community, enjoying the benefits thereof and passing the same to the next generations. Also in an African context, Environmental Justice needs to further address the issues of self-determination and rules of engagement between the TNCs and the host state on the one hand and with the resource-bearing communities on the other hand. Especially for the Niger Delta, with the notion that the "environmental injustice problem in the Niger Delta goes to the heart of the global economic system," Environmental Justice must address the impact of the global economic system on the people of the Niger Delta and the environment (Agahlino, 2010).

The crude oil from the Niger Delta is central to energy security in the world as Nigeria is currently Africa's number 1 crude oil producing country and 13th in the world. As such, the TNCs must continue to exploit the resource to meet global energy demand, notwithstanding the environmental harm this is generating. As we seek solutions to these problems through the Environmental Justice framework, this framework must be broad enough to address "the global regimes of power that overwhelmingly contribute both historically and continuously to the relegation of particular geopolitical places, geographies, and peoples to the bottom of our global hierarchy."

From the foregoing, the thesis adopts the definition of environmental justice by Obiora (2021) because it is broad enough to address the African peculiarities discussed above, and therefore would be effective in the Niger Delta. Obiora (2021) sees Environmental Justice as the equitable distribution of environmental amenities, the rectification and retribution of environmental abuses, the restoration of nature, and the fair exchange of resources. Its main insight challenges the uneven allocation of environmental risks as well as the benefits of environmental protection, industrial production, and economic growth. Given its structural focus, the environmental justice struggle could be seen, not simply as an attack against environmental discrimination, but as a movement to rein in and subject corporate and bureaucratic decision-making, as well as relevant market processes, to democratic scrutiny and accountability. Obiora's (2021) version of Environmental Justice addresses fair distribution of environmental goods and burdens, corrective justice, nature's restoration, equitable exchange of resources, environmental protection, economic growth, participation in resource governance, democracy and accountability. These concepts are lacking and are highly desirable in Nigeria. They would be useful in assisting to resolve the environmental injustice in the Niger Delta (Agahlino, 2010).

The understanding of the components of Environmental Justice is central to the thesis. There is a difference of opinions on the constituents of Environmental Justice. Opinions are divided over whether Environmental Justice is monovalent, bivalent, trivalent or tetravalent. On the monovalent theory Maureen Reed and Colleen George suggest that despite the attempt to break new frontiers, Environmental Justice is still predominantly one-dimensional with only the distributive component. They argue that "conceptually speaking, environmental

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justice research is still primarily framed around the socio-spatial distributions of environmental hazards. Most prominent among these are discussions of air pollution, landfill sites, and toxic waste, albeit with increasingly sophisticated tools such as innovations in GIS and community information systems."

However, distributive justice alone, according to Kaswan, (2022) is "justice in the existing distribution of environmental benefits and burdens", and cannot answer all the environmental justice questions. Murdock (2021), paints a picture which exposes the inadequacy of distributive justice as the only component of Environmental Justice and makes a case for restorative, participatory and procedural justice frameworks. People who live near polluting facilities are frequently treated as second-class citizens whom the rest of society is morally free to ignore. Thus, solutions to harms of this kind must involve not only the cleanup or abatement of the pollution's point source that is, redistributing the environmental burdens but also creating or restoring a positive, more dynamic community image and concept and correcting the prejudices that outsiders may have about the community.

Moreover, Aguilera, Méndez, Pásaro, and Laffon, (2010), note that improving the community's image may also require deep involvement of community members in whatever actions are taken to address the pollution problems. "Deep involvement" means that community members themselves must have a direct role in the decision-making process, rather than just university experts or federal and state employees a concept also referred to as participative and procedural justice. From the foregoing, the thesis is of the view that distributive justice alone is inadequate to explain and answer all the various strands of environmental injustice in the Niger Delta and around the world.

On the other hand, Kaswan (2022) argues that Environmental Justice is bivalent with two components – distributive and political justices - with the latter interested in "the decision-making processes that determine the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens." Again, the weakness in the bivalent argument is that a 2-dimensional approach to Environmental Justice is not enough to explain, or offer a complete solution, to all the strands of environmental injustices. Take for instance, the now famous 2016 '#NoDAPL movement in Standing Rock, USA where Indigenous youth protested against the construction of the 1886 km underground oil pipeline – the Dakota Access Pipeline – which would destroy drinking water sources and sacred places of the Indigenous people.

In this situation Alike, (2019) observed that distributive and political justices would seem inadequate in addressing the concerns of the Indigenous people. Recognition as an element of Environmental Justice would be most appropriate because their contention was not about equitable sharing of resources but about respect for the value that Indigenous people place on water and land. Based on the above, while misrecognition is when "people who should have been treated equally have systematically been treated differently because of who they are, resulting in the injustice", recognition on the other hand, is concerned with "the processes of disrespect, insult and degradation that devalue some people and some place identities in comparison to others."

Other experts argue that Environmental Justice is trivalent. Schlosberg for instance, opines that Environmental Justice has a 3-pronged strategy to analyze environmental wrongs – with the recognitive, distributive and participatory standpoints. Ako (2021) is also a proponent of this school of thought but disagrees with Schlosberg on the characterization of the 3 components. Ako (2021) instead argues that the components of Environmental Justice are distribution, procedure and entitlement. The thesis adopts the earlier argument that even a 3-dimensional approach to Environmental Justice seems inadequate in the analysis of environmental injustices because it excludes restorative justice, which has been described as the "attempts to restore the victim to the condition [he or] she was in before the unjust activity occurred", as a component of Environmental Justice. Robert Kuehn is a proponent of the tetravalent theory, which argues that Environmental Justice has 4 components: distributive; procedural; corrective; and social justice. Robert Melchior Figueroa argues rather that the 4 components of Environmental Justice are distributive, recognition, participatory, and restorative justices.

While Figueroa and Kuehn (2021) agree that distributive justice is a component of Environmental Justice, Figueroa substitutes social justice for recognition. The rest are issues of nomenclature. For instance, what Kuehn terms procedural and corrective justices, Figueroa calls participatory and restorative justices respectively. In the

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analysis of the components of Environmental Justice below, the thesis will adopt the tetravalent approach because it goes further than the other approaches in analyzing and employing Environmental Justice to address environmental harms in the Niger Delta. Specifically, the thesis will adopt with, minor adjustment, Figueroa's components of Environmental Justice (distributive, recognition, participatory, and restorative justices) instead of Kuehn (distributive, procedural, corrective and social justices) because Kuehn excludes recognition which, in my view and as will be seen later in the analysis, would be central to the achievement of Environmental Justice in the Niger Delta. However, the thesis will substitute Kuehn's procedural justice for Figueroa's participatory justice because procedural justice includes participatory justice and goes even further. The thesis will elaborate on this point in the segment on procedural justice.

There seems to be a lack of consensus on the status of Environmental Justice. There appears to be 2 schools of thoughts on whether Environmental Justice is a movement or both a movement 43 and a theory. Experts like Alice Kaswan, Alice Mah and Rhuks Ako are of the opinion that Environmental Justice is a resistance movement dedicated to mobilization and engagement in protest against strands of environmental injustices in marginalized and less-privileged communities. Another school of thought with experts including Esme Murdock and Robert Figueroa198 argues that Environmental Justice is both a movement and a theory with an intellectual dimension. Murdock welded together the 2 schools and opines that Environmental Justice is "a grassroots and people-driven movement" with "academic and intellectual dimensions" Walker corroborated the dual-purpose theory by describing Environmental Justice "both as a political discursive frame and as a focus of academic study." The thesis agrees with the second school of thought. While organizing against environmental injustices are sometimes expressed by but not limited to physical protestations and mobilizations, the theoretical dimension of Environmental Justice seeks to probe and unearth the underlying factors that influence the various decisions that result in environmental injustices and also seek ways to address them.201 While not discountenancing the movement's ambit of Environmental Justice, in this segment on the theoretical framework, emphasis will however be placed on the intellectual underpinning of Environmental Justice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Environmental Justice Theory

Environmental Justice Theory is deeply rooted in the civil rights movement and the broader struggle against systemic inequality. While environmental activism in the 20th century largely focused on conservation and pollution control, it failed to address how environmental hazards disproportionately affected poor and minority communities. The birth of the modern environmental justice movement is often traced to Warren County, North Carolina, in 1982, when African American residents protested the state's decision to dump toxic waste in their community (Bullard, 1993). This event highlighted a disturbing trend: hazardous waste facilities, landfills, and industrial plants were disproportionately located in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods.

The term "environmental justice" was first widely used in the 1987 report by the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, which found that race was the most significant predictor of where hazardous waste facilities were placed in the United States (United Church of Christ, 1987). This report set the foundation for Environmental Justice Theory by demonstrating how marginalized communities bore the brunt of environmental hazards.

One of the most influential figures in the development of Environmental Justice Theory is Dr. Robert D. Bullard, often referred to as the "father of environmental justice." His groundbreaking book, Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality (1990), provided empirical evidence on how African American communities in the southern U.S. were targeted for hazardous waste disposal and industrial pollution. Bullard's work laid the theoretical framework for understanding environmental racism – the systemic practice of placing environmentally hazardous facilities in marginalized communities.

Environmental Justice Theory is based on the principle that all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or economic status, have the right to a clean and healthy environment. The theory argues that environmental policies and decisions should be inclusive, non-discriminatory, and based on fairness (Schlosberg, 2017). It challenges

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the traditional environmental movement, which often prioritized wilderness conservation and pollution control without addressing social justice issues.

At its core, EJT is built on three primary dimensions:

i. Distributive Justice – This aspect focuses on how environmental benefits (such as clean air, parks, and water) and burdens (such as pollution and toxic waste) are distributed across different social groups. Studies have shown that low-income and minority communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards (Brulle & Pellow, 2016).

ii. Procedural Justice – EJT demands that marginalized communities have a voice in environmental decision-making. Historically, these communities have been excluded from policy discussions, leading to decisions that prioritize corporate interests over public health (Agyeman, 2015).

iii. Recognition Justice – This aspect emphasizes that cultural and historical contexts must be acknowledged in environmental policy. Indigenous and marginalized communities often have unique relationships with their environment that must be respected (Whyte, 2016).

Governments and international organizations have increasingly recognized Environmental Justice Theory as a guiding principle for policymaking. In 1994, President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, directing federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their policies and ensuring that no community is disproportionately affected by environmental harm (Clinton, 1994). The United Nations and the European Union have also integrated environmental justice principles into their climate policies, acknowledging the global impact of environmental inequities (UNEP, 2022).

Other theories like the deep ecology theory, sustainability theory, and ecofeminism theory have all gained widespread recognition because they also attempt to address ecological and social concerns. Proposed by Arne Naess (1973), deep ecology emphasizes the intrinsic value of nature, arguing that all living beings have equal rights to exist. While this theory promotes ecological sustainability, it often lacks a strong social justice component (Devall & Sessions, 1985). Unlike EJT, deep ecology does not specifically address racial, economic, and political injustices related to environmental degradation.

The Sustainability Theory is widely discussed in the works of Brundtland (1987), focuses on the need to balance economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection. While sustainability theory is crucial for long-term ecological health, it often fails to challenge power structures that perpetuate environmental injustices. EJT, on the other hand, explicitly confronts systemic inequalities that lead to environmental harm.

Ecofeminism, as developed by scholars like Vandana Shiva and Carolyn Merchant, explores the intersection between environmental degradation and gender oppression. While ecofeminism highlights critical social issues, it does not fully address the racial and economic dimensions of environmental injustice as comprehensively as EJT does (Shiva, 2017).

Dr. Robert D. (2015), Bullard is widely recognized as the leading proponent of Environmental Justice Theory, having introduced the concept in 1990 through his groundbreaking work Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality. Bullard's research provided empirical evidence demonstrating how environmental hazards disproportionately affected marginalized communities, particularly African Americans in the southern United States. His work built upon earlier activism, such as the 1982 Warren County protests, and reinforced the idea that environmental issues were not just about nature conservation but also about social justice (Bullard, 1990).

Bullard framed Environmental Justice Theory around the idea that all people, regardless of race, class, or economic status, have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment, free from disproportionate exposure to pollution and hazardous waste. He argued that environmental policies should be rooted in fairness, recognizing the historical injustices that have placed the greatest environmental burdens on marginalized communities. His

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theory emphasized that environmental decision-making must be inclusive, allowing affected communities to participate in shaping policies that impact their health and livelihoods (Bullard, 2000).

The assumptions of Environmental Justice Theory revolve around the idea that environmental harm is not randomly distributed but is instead shaped by social, economic, and political structures. The first assumption is that environmental racism exists – systemic discrimination leads to hazardous waste sites, polluting industries, and toxic facilities being located in low-income and minority neighborhoods. The second assumption is that procedural injustice is a key factor, meaning that marginalized communities are often excluded from environmental policymaking processes, preventing them from having a say in decisions that directly impact them. The third assumption is that economic interests and industrial expansion are prioritized over human well-being, as corporations and policymakers frequently place profit above the health of vulnerable populations (Brulle & Pellow, 2016).

Opponents of Environmental Justice Theory often come from corporate, conservative political, and traditional environmentalist circles who argue that environmental issues should be approached from a purely ecological standpoint rather than through the lens of social justice. Some critics, including Bjorn Lomborg, argue that focusing on social dimensions of environmental problems diverts attention from larger, global-scale environmental challenges, such as climate change, which they believe should be the primary concern (Lomborg, 2021). Others, particularly pro-business policymakers, argue that economic growth and industrial development should not be hampered by strict environmental justice regulations, as these could discourage investment and slow down economic progress (Simon, 2016). A common opposition view is that market forces should be left to regulate environmental issues, assuming that economic prosperity will eventually lead to better environmental standards across all communities.

Supporters of Environmental Justice Theory include grassroots environmental activists, civil rights organizations, progressive policymakers, and scholars who emphasize the need for an equitable environmental framework. Organizations such as the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have all integrated environmental justice into their policies, advocating for stricter regulations that protect vulnerable communities (UNEP, 2022). Scholars like David Schlosberg and Julian Agyeman have further developed the theory, arguing that environmental justice must be at the center of sustainable development and climate policies (Schlosberg, 2017; Agyeman, 2015). A common view among supporters is that environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without addressing social inequalities, as vulnerable communities are often the first to suffer from climate disasters, pollution, and resource depletion.

Taking a position on Environmental Justice Theory, it is evident that the framework remains highly relevant and essential in shaping modern environmental policies. The theory highlights systemic environmental inequalities, challenges existing power structures, and provides a comprehensive approach to solving environmental problems. Given the increasing global impacts of climate change, pollution, and industrial expansion, Environmental Justice Theory is not just relevant but necessary for ensuring that environmental policies are equitable and inclusive.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Phillipi (2001) presented a paper on the political ecology of war: Natural resources and armed conflicts. Throughout the 1990s, many armed groups have relied on revenues from natural resources such as oil, timber, or gems to substitute for dwindling Cold War sponsorship. Resources not only financed, but in some cases motivated conflicts, and shaped strategies of power based on the commercialisation of armed conflict and the territorialisation of sovereignty around valuable resource areas and trading networks. As such, armed conflict in the post-Cold War period is increasingly characterised by a specific political ecology closely linked to the geography and political economy of natural resources. This paper examines theories of relationships between resources and armed conflicts and the historical processes in which they are embedded. It stresses the vulnerability resulting from resource dependence, rather than conventional notions of scarcity or abundance, the risks of violence linked to the conflictuality of natural resource political economies, and the opportunities for

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armed insurgents resulting from the lootability of resources. Violence is expressed in the subjugation of the rights of people to determine the use of their environment and the brutal patterns of resource extraction and predation. Beyond demonstrating the economic agendas of belligerents, an analysis of the linkages between natural resources and armed conflicts suggests that the criminal character of their inclusion in international primary commodity markets responds to an exclusionary form of globalization; with major implications for the promotion of peace.

Alalekan et al., (2011) conducted a study on "The Niger Delta wetlands: threats to ecosystem services, their importance to dependent communities and possible management measures" They synthesized literature and used the 'Drivers–pressure–state–impact–response' (DPSIR) framework to structure information on changes in the wetlands' ecosystem services and implications for dependent communities. They found that the wetlands' ecosystem services are being eroded through oil and gas exploration, dredging, invasive plant infestation and wetland reclamation. This is exacerbated by rising demand for oil, population growth and weak governance. Mass fish migration, water pollution and reduction of wetland area are also evident, impacting ecosystem services and traditional livelihood systems. This has caused poverty; people have to buy goods that previously could be obtained from the wetlands. Effective wetland management will be aided by: recognition of ecosystem services' contributions to community well-being; understanding how benefits are distributed over time, space, stakeholder; and how these changes in response to pressures. Since key pressures in the wetland are anthropogenic, understanding the role of institutions in relation to the Niger Delta's ecosystem services is imperative.

Cyril, (2011) studied Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta. The article analyzes the ways in which globalized oil extraction results in the dispossession of local people and fuels violent resistance in Nigeria's oil-rich, but impoverished Niger Delta. This follows from the transformation of resistance from non-violent to violent forms, involving well-publicized attacks by Niger Delta, ethnic-minority militias against the Nigerian state-oil multinationals partnership. The main argument is that oil extraction and the inequitable distribution of its benefits fuel disenchantment and conflict between the Niger Delta people, and those regarded as the exploiters and beneficiaries of the oil resources in the region. It also examines the local and transnational dynamics and ambiguities underpinning resistance politics and the prospects for resolving the contradictions spawned by "fossil fuel capital" in the Niger Delta.

Rhuks et al., (2011) published a paper on Forging Peaceful Relationships between Oil-Companies and Host-Communities in Nigeria's Delta Region: A Stakeholder's Perspective to Corporate Social Responsibility. The purpose of this paper was to determine the level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that is expected of oil-multinationals by the host-communities in which they operate in Nigeria's oil-rich Delta region. It also suggests how the aggressive opposition of the host-community to the oil exploration activities of oil companies may be curbed. The method was purely review of extant literatures and deductive arguments that will give insights to how conflict situations arising from denial of rights can be resolved through CSR and stakeholder's perspective. The paper concludes that the major determinant of success of most companies in the world rest in the performance of their CSR to the host-community, stakeholders and the society in general. The oil-companies operating in the Niger Delta region have to re-assess their CSR objectives towards improving their delivery to the intended beneficiaries otherwise the pervasive violent conflicts in the region will persist with adverse consequences on the corporate image, reduced profits of the oil-companies and high cost of the product due to disruptions in production. The paper usefully points out that the Niger Delta region that hosts Nigeria's oil upstream sector has been enmeshed in violent conflicts essentially due to the adverse socio-environmental effects the industry has on their communities. The companies however assert that they operate as responsible corporate entities and as such their operations and activities benefits their host-communities rather than induce violent conflicts.

Edo (2012) researched The Challenges of Effective Environmental Enforcement and Compliance in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, critically examining the concept of environmental enforcement and its practical enforceability in Nigeria. One major gap identified in the research is the limited discussion on grassroots and civil society engagement in strengthening environmental compliance, as well as the role of international environmental treaties in influencing Nigeria's regulatory framework. While the study highlights the political

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and economic challenges of enforcement, it does not explore the effectiveness of legal activism and judicial interventions in holding oil companies accountable. This present research seeks to address these gaps by examining the role of community advocacy, legal frameworks, and international pressure in strengthening environmental enforcement in the Niger Delta, with a focus on sustainable policy reforms and economic diversification as long-term solutions.

Tonwe et al. (2012) investigated Spoils Politics and Environmental Struggle in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. This study sought to understand the nature of the resource struggle in the Niger Delta, where conflicts have been prolonged due to issues of marginalization and exclusion from oil revenue allocation. Since the 1980s, the call for justice in the region was framed within environmental activism, initially expressed through peaceful community protests directed at transnational oil companies, demanding ecological remediation and environmental justice. However, the nature of environmental activism evolved over time, transforming into a low-intensity conflict against the state, leading to the militarization of the region. Although the Federal Government granted amnesty to militants in October 2009 as an initial step toward conflict resolution, the policy has been widely criticized for its inadequate consideration of the historical and socio-political factors underlying the conflict. The study applied the greed and grievance framework to analyze the nature of the conflict, highlighting how environmental justice demands have become intertwined with economic and political motivations. The research further examined the changing dynamics of environmentalism in the Niger Delta and demonstrated how grievances can manifest as greed, creating a mutually reinforcing cycle of conflict. While the study provides critical insights into the interplay between environmental justice, political struggles, and resource conflicts in the region, it does not fully explore alternative governance frameworks or participatory mechanisms that could provide long-term solutions. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into community-based resource governance models, conflict mediation strategies, and sustainable economic alternatives that could mitigate both grievance-driven and opportunistic conflicts in the Niger Delta.

David (2013) studied Public Trust in Government Administrators. As measured by responses in the General Social Survey, it was found that attitudes about the trustworthiness of administrators are more positive than what might be generally thought, and that substantial variation characterizes all trusting attitudes. Perceptions of trustworthiness are influenced by sociodemographic background and interpersonal trust, whereas competence is influenced by political party affiliation. External political efficacy and general assessments of government are significant correlates of both. Thus, perceptions of competence correlate with whether government is doing what citizens want, while perceptions of trustworthiness are influenced by experiences with bureaucrats. Efforts to reform the public bureaucracy with an eye toward increasing trust require strategies to increase the competence and trustworthiness of the public service.

Philips (2014) studied NDDC, conflict, peace-building and community development, in the Niger Delta Region. After over 54 years of the discovery of oil and gas in over 500 communities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, the people are still “poor, neglected, under-developed and backward” resulting from suffocation occasioned by the Nigerian State, and the hazards and conflicts associated with oil and gas exploration / exploitation. This was followed closely by the prolonged, unfruitful peaceful negotiations that the people, spearheaded by the youths, have in recent times resorted to violent disruption of oil installations, kidnapping, hostage taking and militia activities in the region. This paper is focused on the appraisal of the efforts of the Federal Government’s interventionist Agencies over the years with specific emphasis on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) between 2001 and 2010. This appraisal is imperative since the mandate of NDDC is to “resolve conflict and build peace” thereby restoring the confidence of the people in the region. It is the conviction of the author therefore that, the paper is significant in several respects and the findings and recommendations will to a significant extent forestall the looming war which in turn will guarantee peace and sustainable Community Development in the region.

Anejionu et al., (2015) published a paper on the Niger Delta is home to the third largest mangrove forest in the world, endowed with extensive freshwater swamp and tropical rain forests, which are rich in unique biological diversity. However, the region has experienced a wide range of environmental pollution and degradation as a result of decadal extraction of its huge hydrocarbon reserves. Despite the financial benefits accruing from hydrocarbon export, it has raised serious environmental concerns in the region. The pollution has heavily

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impacted on the ecosystem and health of the inhabitants. Prominent among the hydrocarbon-induced pollution include oil spill, gas flaring, and pipeline explosions. Over 10,000 oil spill and pipeline explosion incidents have been recorded and more than 350 billion cubic metres of gas have been flared in the region in the last 14 years. These have caused huge human and material losses in addition to environmental degradation and poor air quality. The region's ecosystem has therefore been declared one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world. This paper reviewed past and current research on the impact of pollutions from oil and gas exploitation activities, alongside the history of hydrocarbon exploration in the region. It importantly outlined the geographies of the pollution, showing their magnitude and spatial spread to demonstrate how they may have impacted on the wellbeing of the inhabitants of the region. In addition, the paper reviewed lapses in the country's legal framework that has encouraged such practices harmful to the environment. It critically analysed the failure of the relevant legal framework in imposing responsible attitudes and behaviours on the oil and gas companies towards the environment.

Zabbey et al., (2017) conducted a study on Remediation of contaminated lands in the Niger Delta, Nigeria: Prospects and challenges. They noted that contamination of the total environment (air, soil, water and biota) by crude oil has become a paramount interest in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Studies have revealed variable impacts of oil toxicity on the environment and exposed populations. The revelation gained much international attention in 2011 with the release of Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This has up scaled local and international pressures for urgent clean-up and restoration of degraded bio-resource rich environments of the Niger Delta, starting from Ogoniland. Previous remediation attempts in the area had failed due to erroneous operational conclusions (such as conclusions by oil industry operators that the Niger Delta soil is covered by a layer of clay and as such oil percolation remains within the top soil and makes remediation by enhanced natural attenuation (RENA) suitable for the region) and the adoption of incompatible and ineffective approaches (i.e. RENA) for the complex and dynamic environments. Perennial conflicts, poor regulatory oversights and incoherent standards are also challenges. Following UNEP recommendations, the Federal Government of Nigeria recently commissioned the clean-up and remediation of Ogoniland project; it would be novel and trend setting. While UNEP outlined some measures of contaminated land remediation, no specific approach was identified to be most effective for the Niger Delta region. Resolving the technical dilemma and identified social impediments is the key success driver of the above project. In this paper, they therefore reviewed the socio-economic and ecological impacts of contaminated land in the Niger Delta region and the global state-of-the-art remediation approaches. They used coastal environment clean-up case studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of bioremediation (sometimes in combination with other technologies) for remediating most of the polluted sites in the Niger Delta. Bioremediation should primarily be the preferred option considering its low greenhouse gas and environmental footprints, and low-cost burden on the weak and overstretched economy of Nigeria.

Leera, George-West, and Alalibo (2017) researched Environmental Pollution in the Niger Delta and Consequential Challenges to Sustainable Development of the Region: The Role of an Individual, focusing on the detrimental impact of modern lifestyles on environmental sustainability, particularly in resource-rich regions like the Niger Delta. A significant gap identified in the research is the limited examination of how government policies and corporate environmental responsibility can complement individual efforts in mitigating pollution. While the study emphasizes the role of individuals, it does not extensively discuss how systemic changes-such as stricter environmental regulations and corporate accountability-can provide a more sustainable solution. This present research seeks to bridge these gaps by assessing the intersection of individual responsibility, corporate accountability, and government policy in environmental sustainability, exploring strategic approaches to harmonizing these efforts for a more effective pollution mitigation framework in the Niger Delta.

Okwechime (2017) investigated environmental conflicts and forced migration in the Nigerian Niger Delta. This study examines the link between environmental conflicts and forced migration in the region, emphasizing how the capitalist mode of production and its social relations contribute to resource scarcities, ultimately leading to conflict and displacement. By analyzing the three levels of conflict that typically drive migration in the Niger Delta, the study critiques the population–conflict thesis of Homer-Dixon and highlights the Nigerian state's alliance with global capital, which has negatively impacted environmental justice, security, and sustainability in oil-producing communities. While the study effectively underscores the socio-economic and political

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dimensions of forced migration, it does not sufficiently explore alternative, community-centered solutions for mitigating migration pressures and addressing the long-term socio-environmental consequences of oil extraction. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into sustainable development strategies, policy reforms, and grassroots interventions that can enhance resilience and stability in the Niger Delta.

Okonkwo and Ekekwe (2017) researched Environmental Management and Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta. Their study examined the persistent crises in the Niger Delta, which stem from unsustainable oil production and environmental degradation that undermine local livelihoods. While the oil industry is frequently blamed for these challenges, the study emphasized that the role of environmental management in the sector has received inadequate attention. The research specifically highlighted that weak enforcement of environmental regulations in Nigeria is a major factor contributing to developmental challenges in the region. It argued that ongoing environmental degradation, loss of farmlands, depletion of wildlife and aquatic species, deforestation, and the destruction of ecosystems coupled with youth restiveness and violent conflicts-are fueled by the government's failure to enforce environmental laws effectively. The study, which relied on secondary data, concluded that stronger political will, coupled with increased public participation through NGOs and stakeholder engagement, is necessary to enforce environmental regulations for sustainable development in the Niger Delta. However, while the research identifies weak enforcement as a core issue, it does not explore in depth the institutional reforms, policy innovations, or community-driven approaches that could enhance environmental governance. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into practical, enforceable regulatory frameworks and grassroots participation models that can drive sustainable environmental management in the Niger Delta.

Odisu (2017) examined The Enduring Issue in Nigerian Politics: The Niger Delta Crisis. The study analyzed how federal government intervention programs have been managed in addressing the persistent issues of underdevelopment and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, which have resulted from oil exploration and exploitation. Using a descriptive research method, the paper revealed that the region remains underdeveloped not solely due to the federal government but primarily because of corruption among the local political elite, who have mismanaged resources meant for development. The study argued that these corrupt politicians, rather than external forces, are the true adversaries of the region’s progress. Consequently, it recommended that militants and activists advocating for regional development should shift their focus towards holding the region’s politicians accountable for their actions and ensuring transparency in governance.

Omotola (2017) investigated "From the OMPADEC to the NDDC: An Assessment of State Responses to Environmental Insecurity in the Niger Delta, Nigeria." The study critically examined the effectiveness of the federal government’s institutional responses particularly the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in addressing environmental insecurity in the Niger Delta. Despite efforts to mitigate the crisis, findings indicate that these interventions have been largely inadequate, as environmental degradation, extreme poverty, ethnic tensions, and armed militancy persist in the region. The study attributes these shortcomings to systemic corruption, political interference, lack of grassroots representation, and structural inefficiencies that have hindered the commissions from achieving meaningful development. Omotola argues that for sustainable solutions to emerge, Nigeria must transition from a rent-seeking state to a developmental state characterized by good governance, transparency, and autonomy from elite interests. The study further recommends that institutional responses should be more inclusive, with direct partnerships between government agencies and grassroots organizations such as community-development associations and rural-focused NGOs. Additionally, robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks must be established to ensure accountability and effectiveness in policy implementation. While the research highlights the fundamental challenges facing environmental governance in the Niger Delta, it does not fully explore alternative governance models that could enhance participatory decision-making. Future research could focus on community-driven development strategies that integrate local populations into environmental and resource management processes, thereby fostering long-term stability and sustainability in the region.

Amugo (2018), in the paper titled Environmental Degradation and the Niger Delta Crises, examined the alarming issue of environmental degradation as a global challenge fueled by increasing industrial activities, which have contributed to global warming and ozone layer depletion, posing severe threats to humanity. The findings

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revealed that the Niger Delta has become the epicenter of oil exploration in Nigeria, with multinational companies operating in the region and leaving behind widespread pollution, environmental degradation, and socio-economic hardships, which have fueled violent conflicts and militant activities. The study highlighted that pollution from oil spills, gas flaring, and poor environmental management by these corporations has significantly contributed to the unrest, leading to loss of lives and a disruption in the global oil market. However, despite these insights, the study did not extensively explore the effectiveness of existing remediation efforts and their impact on conflict resolution in the region. This gap presents an opportunity for the present research to critically assess the relationship between environmental remediation projects and communal conflicts in the Niger Delta, evaluating whether environmental restoration initiatives have played a significant role in mitigating crises or exacerbating tensions.

Gbenemene (2018) conducted a study titled The Patterns and Trends of Environmental Conflicts in the Niger Delta: A Community Approach, which investigated the environmental impacts of oil exploration and their role in fueling conflicts in the Niger Delta region. The study aimed to achieve several objectives, including identifying the patterns and trends of environmental conflicts, examining the drivers and dynamics of these conflicts, and assessing the existing mechanisms for managing disputes over oil spills and gas flares. The population of the study comprised members of oil-producing communities, particularly Bodo and K-Dere in Rivers State, alongside oil company representatives and regulatory agencies. The sampling technique focused on selecting these communities due to their history of environmental degradation and conflicts with oil companies, particularly Shell. A critical gap identified in the research is the limited effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms in addressing longstanding grievances over environmental damage. While the study acknowledges the role of oil spills caused by corroded and aging pipelines, as well as third-party interference it does not fully explore alternative regulatory frameworks or community-driven remediation strategies that could mitigate conflicts. However, it does not extensively investigate policy interventions or technological solutions that could reduce gas flaring and its associated health risks. The present research aims to bridge this gap by exploring innovative community engagement strategies, improved regulatory frameworks, and sustainable environmental management practices that could minimize conflicts and enhance coexistence between oil companies and host communities in the Niger Delta.

Onibere et al. (2018) investigated Conflict Resolution in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: An Empirical Investigation. The study examined the persistent conflicts in the Niger Delta, driven by prolonged socio-economic and political marginalization, extreme poverty, hunger, disease, environmental pollution, and high youth unemployment. Despite numerous interventions, violent conflicts in the region have remained unresolved. Data were collected from indigenes of oil-producing communities, oil exploration companies, oil-based organizations, and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to assess existing projects, criteria for implementation, causes of conflicts, and current resolution strategies. The findings identified political, socio-economic, and environmental risk factors as major contributors to conflict escalation. While the study provides valuable insights into the realities of conflict in the region, it does not fully explore innovative, community-driven conflict resolution mechanisms tailored to the specific needs of the affected populations. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into sustainable peacebuilding strategies that incorporate local perspectives, inclusive governance, and economic empowerment initiatives as long-term solutions for conflict mitigation in the Niger Delta.

George et al., (2018) carried out a study on Environmental Pollution and Reportage in Nigeria. The incidence of reportage of environmental pollution by Newspapers was under study here. This study was carried out for the period of 9 months (Sept. 2010-May 2011), 360 editions of four newspapers gotten from University of Port Harcourt Donald Ekong library, Abuja Park Choba. The four newspapers used were: Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Sun and This Day. Population size for the study was 1090 editions. Of the sample size as 360 editions, only 334 editions were found (92.7%) while (7.2%) 26 were missing. There were only 18 editions (5%). Out of these 25 stories, 24 (96%) were on oil spillage while only 1 (4%) was on gas flaring. This result shows proof that there is very poor reportage of environmental pollution by the Nigeria Newspapers. This implies that environmental pollution is treated with levity by the Nigerian media houses.

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Ogadi et al. (2019) conducted a study titled Environmental Degradation, Conflict and Criminality in the Niger Delta: A Conceptual and Empirical Discourse, which explored the interconnectedness between environmental degradation, social conflict, and criminality in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study aimed to achieve several objectives, including analyzing the impact of environmental degradation caused by oil multinational corporations, examining how this degradation has contributed to conflict and criminal activities, and assessing the division among youth groups between those advocating for resource and environmental justice and those engaging in criminal acts such as hostage-taking and kidnapping. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both conceptual discourse and empirical analysis. It relied on secondary sources such as policy documents, reports, and previous research, as well as qualitative data from case studies and interviews with stakeholders, including community members, activists, and security personnel. The population included individuals from oil-producing communities, government officials, and members of militant and criminal groups, with purposive sampling used to select key informants. A significant gap identified in the research is the lack of a comprehensive framework to distinguish between legitimate environmental justice movements and criminal elements that exploit the situation for personal gain. By the same token, while the study highlights the role of oil multinational corporations in environmental degradation, it does not provide an in-depth analysis of corporate accountability mechanisms or community-led environmental governance strategies. The present research seeks to bridge these gaps by developing a framework for distinguishing between conflict-driven activism and criminality, proposing policy interventions to strengthen environmental justice advocacy while curbing criminal activities, and exploring community-based approaches to sustainable environmental management in the Niger Delta.

Sofiri (2019) researched Critical Environmental Challenges in the Niger Delta: Exploring Strategic Solutions, examining the persistent environmental crises in the region, particularly the role of multinational oil companies in environmental degradation. The research population included oil-producing communities, government regulatory agencies, and oil companies, with purposive sampling used to analyze the most affected areas. One major gap in the study is its limited examination of community-driven environmental initiatives and the role of international environmental laws in enforcing better corporate responsibility. Likewise, while the study critiques the ineffectiveness of government policies, it does not provide a comprehensive analysis of alternative policy frameworks that could lead to more sustainable solutions. This present research aims to address these gaps by exploring the potential for community-led environmental governance, the role of international regulatory bodies, and the implementation of more robust environmental policies that ensure long-term sustainability in the Niger Delta.

Ighedosa (2019), in the book Modern Advances in Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, investigated Climate Change: Assessing the Vulnerability of the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria. The study highlights climate change as a global crisis, driven by greenhouse gas emissions and marked by rising temperatures, unpredictable weather patterns, and extreme environmental events such as heat waves, flooding, and prolonged droughts. It discusses the vulnerability of mega-deltas, particularly in Africa and Asia, to climate-related hazards such as sea level rise, coastal erosion, and river flooding, which are worsened by human activities. The Niger Delta region, in particular, faces compounded environmental threats due to oil spills, gas flaring, and unchecked environmental degradation. While the research underscores the urgent need for mitigation and adaptation strategies in the region, it does not fully explore localized, community-driven resilience measures that could be integrated with global climate policies. This gap provides an opportunity for further study on sustainable, community-based climate adaptation approaches that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while addressing the region's unique environmental and socio-economic challenges.

Bodo (2019) investigated Deep Issues behind the Crisis in the Niger Delta Region: The Case of Oil Exploration in Ogoniland, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study aimed to examine the underlying causes of the crisis in the Niger Delta region, using the case of oil exploration in Ogoniland, while also proposing solutions to address the identified challenges. To achieve this objective, the study utilized focus group discussions, unstructured interviews, and oral testimonies for data collection, with analysis conducted through coding, transcription from local dialects to English, rewriting, and interpretation. The findings revealed that the expectations of the Ogoni people from the Federal Government and Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) had not been met, leading to the proliferation of illegal refineries and other criminal activities in the region. The people

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attributed their plight to SPDC, the Federal Government, corrupt traditional rulers, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), and some community youths. However, the Ogoni people believed that the full implementation of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) report on Ogoniland and the Ogoni Bill of Rights would alleviate their suffering. The study recommended that SPDC should refrain from making agreements with traditional rulers and politicians regarding developmental projects without the inclusion of the people. Instead, SPDC should engage in town hall meetings, focus group discussions, or distribute questionnaires to the local communities in Ogoni to determine the most effective solutions from the perspective of the people themselves, rather than relying solely on the decisions of Ogoni leaders, which may not reflect the consensus of the majority. While this study highlights the socio-political and economic struggles of the Ogoni people, it does not fully explore alternative economic empowerment programs or local conflict resolution frameworks that could mitigate the crisis. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into how community-driven economic initiatives and inclusive governance models could serve as sustainable solutions to the ongoing conflict in Ogoniland.

Bodo and Gimah (2019) investigated Oil Crisis in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Genesis and Extent. Their study examined the longstanding neglect and marginalization experienced by the people of the Niger Delta due to petroleum exploration and the distribution of its products by multinational oil companies and the Nigerian government. The failure to equitably distribute oil wealth has fueled local grievances, leading to violent confrontations, including attacks on government forces, oil workers, and oil installations. These conflicts have disrupted oil exploration activities, significantly reducing government revenue from oil sales. Moreover, the persistent oil crisis has contributed to the rise of criminal activities, further destabilizing the region. The study highlights how illegal bunkering, pipeline vandalism, and the diversion of refined petroleum products have become entrenched criminal enterprises, benefiting both militants and elements within the military. The research critically analyzed the historical trajectory of oil exploration in the region, tracing the origins and consequences of the ongoing crisis while exploring potential solutions for the government to restore stability. However, while the study provides an in-depth analysis of the root causes and consequences of the oil crisis, it does not extensively explore the role of community-driven peace initiatives, alternative economic opportunities for youth, or the effectiveness of past government interventions. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into sustainable conflict resolution mechanisms, policy-driven socio-economic development programs, and participatory governance models that could address the underlying drivers of the Niger Delta crisis.

Amadi and Alapiki (2019) investigated Environmental Security Threats and Policy Response in the Niger Delta, Nigeria (1990-2016): Breakthroughs in Research and Practice. The study explored the growing environmental security threats in the Niger Delta region, which have resulted from oil resource exploitation by Multinational Oil Corporations (MNOCs). These threats include oil spills, water and land pollution, gas flaring, acid rain, and mangrove deforestation, all of which have contributed to ecological degradation, community vulnerability, and environmental emergencies. Using a political ecology framework, the study examined how global power dynamics influence natural resource extraction and assessed the Nigerian government's policy responses to environmental security concerns. Findings indicated that poor policy implementation and weak regulatory frameworks have exacerbated environmental insecurity in the region. The study recommended stronger state intervention, improved regulatory mechanisms, and a more inclusive approach to policy-making to address environmental security challenges effectively.

Onyige (2019) investigated Environmental Degradation and Livelihood Vulnerabilities in the Niger Delta: Examining the Role of Artisanal Crude Oil Refining. This study explores the impact of artisanal crude oil refining on environmental degradation and livelihood vulnerabilities in the Niger Delta region. While previous research has focused on the negative effects of multinational oil companies, this study highlights how the rise of artisanal refining has further worsened environmental conditions. Using a qualitative research design, data was collected from six communities across Bayelsa, Rivers, and Delta States through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with community leaders, chiefs, youth and women representatives, local fishermen, and farmers. Findings reveal that artisanal refining activities take place in the creeks, where hazardous hydrocarbons are discharged directly into waterways and the atmosphere, leading to severe environmental damage. This degradation has significantly affected traditional livelihoods, particularly fishing, farming, and mangrove forest harvesting, making these occupations highly vulnerable. The study concludes that artisanal refining has

exacerbated both environmental and socioeconomic challenges in the region. To address this issue, the study recommends government intervention through the provision of basic infrastructure, the establishment of modular refineries to reduce unemployment, and enlightenment campaigns to discourage artisanal refining.

Khafagy (2019) published a paper on Political institutions and financial cooperative development. This paper analyses the influence of political institutions on the development of financial cooperatives. It proposes a political economy theory where autocratic regimes deliberately oppose the development of a well-functioning financial cooperative sector to maintain their political influence, and prevent the formation of strong pressure groups that can threaten the current political status quo and reduce the governing elites' economic benefits from underdeveloped and exclusive financial sector. Using panel data from 65 developing countries from 1995–2014, the results show that democracy, political rights and civil liberties promote financial cooperative development. These results are robust in controlling for endogeneity as well as other economic and institutional factors.

Mbah et al., (2019) presented a paper on the roles of hate speech, ethnicity and region were very central to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. They noted that essentially, the elections created "mobilisational gaps", built around religion and ethnicity. These factors shaped the pre- and post-election periods and divisions between ethnic groups associated with the incumbent regime (in-group) and other ethnic groups (out-group). This triggered widespread inter-group mistrust and insecurity which have conduced into post-election appointments along primordial lines like religion, region and ethnicity. Consequently, political inclusion and national integration have become elusive. Despite the emphasis of Goal #10.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on political inclusion of everyone irrespective of race and ethnicity, post-election appointments have been divisive. Using qualitative research approach, this paper investigates the link between the outcome of the 2015 presidential election, political exclusion and national integration in Nigeria. It posits that democratization of politics is the panacea for political tension in Nigeria.

Christian et al., (2019) studied the Challenges of Establishing Universal Health Coverage in Enugu State, South East Nigeria. They asserted that financial risk protection for healthcare is deficient in Enugu state, Southeast Nigeria and the worst affected are the rural dwellers and the poorest, thus creating both socioeconomic and geographic inequity in access and use of services. The study aimed at eliciting the level of awareness and use of pre-payment mechanisms, and more importantly, determining the economic and political factors that facilitate or constrain achievement of Universal Health Coverage in Enugu state, Southeast Nigeria. The study was conducted in two purposively chosen urban and rural local government areas(LGA) of Enugu state with mixed method. Cross-sectional household questionnaire survey was conducted on 802 sample size from the two LGAs and 12 key informants participated in In-depth interviews (IDIs). The quantitative data was analyzed with STATA using descriptive statistics while the qualitative IDI data was organized into nodes and sub-nodes using Nvivo: political and economic factors, corruption, communication/Awareness, capacity development / Infrastructure, policy development, leadership and referral system. Later, findings were thematically analyzed. The survey results showed that 84% of the study sample have secondary school education and 83% are engaged in employment or petty business. About 56% are aware of prepayment mechanism for healthcare bills but only 10% of them have used prepayment mechanisms. Out of pocket payment (85%) is the main source of payment at health facilities. Major political constraining factors to UHC revealed by the IDI include lack of political will backed with financial commitment from the political leaders, lack of legislative framework for UHC, lack of trust on the political leaders/government by the citizenry and inactive civil society organizations. Also, the poor fiscal space for health and the poverty level in the populace are big threats to sustainable UHC in Enugu state. Other economic challenges include corruption, poor health capacity development and poorly paid healthcare workers leading to poor quality of health care delivery. There is need for comprehensive health system development in the state to accommodate UHC. It was therefore concluded that establishment of sustainable UHC in Enugu state faces considerable political and economic challenges. There is need for increased government budgetary allocation for UHC to ensure coverage for the poor and vulnerable members. The lack of legislative framework for UHC could be resolved by legislative arm of the government. The government should invest in health system development to improve the quality of health care services to compliment the FRP component of UHC.

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Gbenemene et al., (2019) studied the Patterns and Trends of Environmental Conflicts in the Niger Delta: A Community Approach. They noted that the negative impact of oil exploration on the Niger Delta environment cannot be overemphasized. Majority of the damage to the environment are due to oil spill and gas flares. Oil spills are due to corrosive and expired pipelines, while others are due to third party involvement. Apart from oil spills, gas flares has also been very destructive to the environment as toxic gas are released into the atmosphere daily. This gas flares causes breathing problems to inhabitants of local communities of the Niger Delta area. This research therefore examines the patterns, trends, drivers and dynamics of conflict over environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. The study also determines existing mechanism for management of conflict over oil spills and gas flares in two selected communities: Bodo and K-Dere in Rivers State. They adopted a qualitative research design, and relied on primary and secondary sources of data. They found that oil spills and gas flares were the cause of conflict between the oil prospective companies especially Shell and oil bearing communities.

Adebanji (2020) conducted a study titled Environmental and Resource Conflicts in the Niger Delta: An Impediment to Nigeria's Transition to the Green Economy, which examined the impact of environmental and resource conflicts on Nigeria's economic transformation agenda. The study aimed to achieve several objectives, including assessing the extent to which environmental and resource conflicts in the Niger Delta hinder Nigeria's transition to a green economy, evaluating the role of oil revenue in funding economic reforms, analyzing the effectiveness of government policy proposals and development plans, and exploring the potential of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) in mitigating the adverse effects of oil and gas exploration. The study adopted a qualitative research design, relying on secondary data sources such as policy documents, government reports, and scholarly literature. The population included stakeholders from government agencies, oil companies, environmental advocacy groups, and local communities affected by resource conflicts. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants and relevant case studies for analysis. A major gap identified in the study is the lack of a comprehensive strategic environmental assessment of oil and gas exploration activities in the Niger Delta, which has led to inadequate regional planning for environmental sustainability. While the research highlights the need for SEA as a tool for mitigating environmental degradation and conflict, it does not sufficiently explore the institutional and political barriers that have hindered its implementation in Nigeria. Additionally, the study does not provide an in-depth analysis of alternative economic pathways that could reduce Nigeria's dependence on oil revenue and facilitate a smoother transition to a green economy. The present research seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the feasibility of integrating SEA into Nigeria's oil and gas sector regulations, proposing policy interventions to enhance environmental governance, and exploring sustainable economic diversification strategies that could accelerate Nigeria's transition to a green economy while addressing the root causes of environmental and resource conflicts in the Niger Delta.

Onyishi (2020) investigated Artisanal Refining of Crude Oil in the Niger Delta: A Challenge to Clean-up and Remediation in Ogoniland. This study examined the role of illegal artisanal oil refining in contributing to environmental pollution in the Niger Delta, alongside the well-documented impacts of multinational oil corporations. While existing literature acknowledges that the expansion of artisanal refining and the use of crude technology exacerbate environmental problems, the extent of their contribution remains unclear. The study assessed how small-scale, subsistent crude oil processing, which operates outside the boundaries of state law, has influenced the persistent environmental degradation in the region. By employing qualitative data collection methods and content analysis, the research utilized enterprise value chain analysis to highlight the economic interests sustaining oil bunkering, oil theft, and petro-piracy. Findings revealed that the thriving artisanal oil-refining economy has significantly hindered the effectiveness of the Ogoniland clean-up and remediation programme, rendering it unsustainable. Although this study provided valuable insights into the economic drivers of illegal refining and its environmental consequences, it did not sufficiently address alternative, community-based economic models that could provide viable and legal livelihoods for those engaged in artisanal refining. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into sustainable economic interventions and policy frameworks that balance environmental conservation with economic empowerment in oil-producing communities.

Chijioke and Ufomba (2020) investigated The Impact of Oil Exploration and Environmental Degradation in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Study of Oil Producing Communities in Akwa Ibom State. This study examined

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the environmental consequences of crude oil exploration in six oil-producing communities in Akwa Ibom State, Niger Delta. The research was necessary due to the severe damage oil exploration has inflicted on agricultural production, particularly fishing and farming, which were once the primary sources of livelihood for the local population. Findings revealed that soil infertility, health hazards, and underdevelopment have forced many residents to abandon their land in search of alternative means of survival. Using secondary data sources, the study established a significant relationship between oil exploration and environmental degradation in Akwa Ibom State. While the study provided crucial insights into the negative impact of oil exploration on the environment and livelihoods, it did not propose detailed strategies for sustainable environmental management or economic alternatives for affected communities. Further research could explore policy interventions and community-led initiatives aimed at mitigating environmental degradation while promoting sustainable development in oil-producing areas.

Paul, (2020) studied the Changing Notion of Democracy and Public Participation in Cities in Africa: A Time for an Alternative? He asserted that participation has become an increasingly important aspect in local governance as African cities experience increasing urbanization and pressing social needs. In the interests of advancing democracy, inclusive participation of citizens has become a guiding notion of how local governments deliver development to all without excluding any section of the populace. The challenge for most African cities is determining how inclusive citizen participation should inform development in a complex society faced with competing socio-economic and political needs. In the same breath, the notion of democracy is being challenged by different sections of the populace. The contestation is about who is benefiting from democracy and at whose expense. In this case, most African cities wear the coat of a developmental state mired in corruption and patronage politics. From this standpoint, the notion of democracy is contested, mostly by citizens who are experiencing poor basic service delivery and increasing taxes as cities struggle to raise revenues sustainably. The task of this paper was to interrogate these salient issues. Firstly, it examines the concepts of participation and democracy, exploring their convergence and divergence in the broader discourse of development and democracy. Secondly, the chapter seeks to explore the extent to which these concepts are being upheld by city governments in the context of equality and statutory provision, given the diversity of city populations. Thirdly, the chapter examines the notion of participation in enabling deliberations, allowing for divergent views without promoting consensus-based political outcomes excluding dissident voices. Fourthly, it interrogates the extent of decision-making processes, determining the extent the city dwellers influence policies. All together, these various issues are intended to enable critical reflection of the changing notions of participation and democracy in African cities. The paper concludes with a suggestion of an alternative mechanism of participation in restoring the voice of citizens towards effective and inclusive governance.

Zabbey et al. (2020) conducted a study titled Remediation of Contaminated Lands in the Niger Delta, Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges, which explored the widespread environmental contamination caused by crude oil pollution in the Niger Delta region. The study set out to achieve several objectives, including assessing the extent of environmental degradation due to oil spills, evaluating past remediation efforts, identifying socio-economic and ecological challenges, and proposing effective clean-up strategies for the region. The population of the study comprised oil-affected communities in the Niger Delta, regulatory agencies, and environmental experts, while the sampling technique focused on case studies of past remediation projects and comparative analyses of global clean-up practices. A significant research gap identified in the study is the lack of a well-defined, region-specific remediation approach tailored to the Niger Delta's unique environmental conditions. Although the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report of 2011 highlighted critical remediation measures, it did not prescribe a singular, most effective method for the region. Additionally, previous remediation attempts were hindered by flawed assumptions, such as the misconception that the region’s soil composition limits oil penetration, leading to ineffective strategies like remediation by enhanced natural attenuation (RENA). Furthermore, regulatory inefficiencies, persistent conflicts, and incoherent environmental policies have contributed to failed remediation efforts. While the Federal Government of Nigeria has recently commissioned a large-scale clean-up of Ogoni land, challenges remain regarding implementation and sustainability. The study concluded that bioremediation especially when combined with other advanced techniques offers a promising solution due to its low environmental impact, minimal greenhouse gas emissions, and cost-effectiveness, which is crucial for Nigeria’s struggling economy. However, there remains a critical need for further research into optimizing bioremediation methods specifically for the Niger Delta’s environmental and socio-political

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landscape. This present study aims to bridge this gap by examining the most effective remediation technologies that align with the region's ecological dynamics and socio-economic realities, thereby contributing to the development of a more comprehensive and sustainable environmental restoration framework.

Ubani and Gilbert (2021) conducted a study titled Environmental Degradation in the Niger Delta: A Re-Appraisal of the Politics of Environmental Remediation in Ogoni land, which critically examined the implementation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report recommendations on Ogoni land and the political complexities surrounding environmental remediation efforts in the region. The study set out to achieve multiple objectives, including assessing the extent of environmental degradation in Ogoni land, evaluating the level of compliance with the UNEP report's recommendations, and analyzing the political factors influencing the cleanup process. The study adopted a qualitative research design and was extracted from a doctoral thesis submitted to the Department of Political Science at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in Port Harcourt. The population comprised key stakeholders, including Ogoni community members, environmental activists, government agencies, and representatives of MNOCs. The sampling technique involved purposively selecting respondents with direct knowledge of the environmental issues and the cleanup efforts. A critical gap identified in the research is the lack of effective mechanisms for depoliticizing the cleanup process to ensure swift and comprehensive remediation. While the study highlights the dangers of continued environmental degradation and the possibility of renewed agitation in Ogoni land, it does not extensively explore alternative governance strategies that could enhance transparency, community involvement, and accountability in the remediation efforts. Moreover, although the study applies the environmental scarcity theoretical perspective to analyze the conflict implications of delayed cleanup efforts, it does not sufficiently investigate sustainable environmental policies or technological solutions that could accelerate restoration. The present research aims to bridge these gaps by examining innovative policy frameworks, exploring community-led environmental governance models, and identifying efficient remediation techniques that could facilitate a more effective and transparent cleanup process in Ogoniland.

Giadom and Wills (2021) conducted a study titled Niger Delta Remediation – Complex Balancing among the Local Community, Government Agencies, NGOs, Cleanup Contractors, and the Petroleum Industry; An Example from Bodo Ogoniland, Nigeria, which examined the complexities of environmental remediation in the Niger Delta, particularly in Bodo, Ogoni land. The study aimed to achieve several objectives, including assessing the extent of oil-related damage to mangrove habitats, evaluating the impact of oil spills on local livelihoods and public health, analyzing the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in remediation efforts, and identifying the challenges faced in the cleanup process. The study employed a qualitative research design and relied on data from interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The population included members of the local community, representatives of government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cleanup contractors, and oil industry stakeholders. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were directly involved in or affected by the remediation process. A significant research gap identified in this study is the persistent challenge of oil theft and illegal refining, which continues to cause environmental degradation despite ongoing cleanup efforts. While the research provides valuable insights into the mediation process and stakeholder engagement, it does not sufficiently explore alternative policy interventions or enforcement mechanisms that could prevent recurrent oil spills and enhance the long-term sustainability of remediation efforts. Furthermore, although the study highlights the successes and setbacks of the BMI, it does not deeply analyze the broader governance and institutional challenges that impede environmental restoration projects in the Niger Delta. The present research seeks to bridge these gaps by examining more effective regulatory frameworks, exploring technological innovations in oil spill prevention and remediation, and proposing community-driven environmental management strategies that could enhance the success of future cleanup efforts in Bodo and other affected areas of the Niger Delta.

Ebiede (2021), in the paper Conflict Drivers: Environmental Degradation and Corruption in the Niger Delta Region, examines how environmental degradation and corruption contribute to conflicts in the Niger Delta. The study argues that environmental degradation caused by the oil industry restricts the ability of local communities to utilize their natural resources, while corruption among public officials deprives the people of the developmental benefits derived from oil revenues. This combination has significantly hindered economic and social progress, leading to violent expressions of dissent. While the paper highlights these critical issues, it does

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not extensively explore specific policy-driven solutions or alternative governance structures that could mitigate these challenges. This gap presents an opportunity for further research to examine practical frameworks for ensuring transparency in resource management, enhancing environmental policies, and fostering sustainable peace in the region.

Bashir (2021) investigated environmental, public health, and socio-economic issues of oil spillage in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. This study critically reviewed the socio-economic trends in the Niger Delta, highlighting the far-reaching consequences of oil spillage on public health, environmental sustainability, and economic stability. The Niger Delta, a densely populated and resource-rich region, contributes up to 80% of Nigeria's economic growth, yet it remains underdeveloped due to policies that often marginalize local communities. The study discusses how multinational oil companies exploit fossil fuel resources with little regard for environmental sustainability, while the Nigerian government, despite efforts to mitigate oil spillages, struggles with enforcement due to legal failures and corruption. Although the research provides a detailed analysis of the socio-environmental and public health impacts of oil spills, it does not fully explore innovative regulatory mechanisms or community-led initiatives that could strengthen enforcement and ensure sustainable development. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into effective policy implementation, stronger legal frameworks, and grassroots environmental management strategies that can mitigate the devastating effects of oil spillage in the Niger Delta.

Ohagwam (2022) investigated The Niger Delta Crises in the Niger Delta Novel: Reflections on Kaine Agary's Yellow-Yellow. This study applied ecocriticism as a theoretical bridge between literature and the physical environment, demonstrating how literature serves as a lens for examining environmental degradation and socio-economic struggles. The research explored how Kaine Agary's Yellow-Yellow portrays the Niger Delta crises, particularly the environmental destruction and socio-political issues caused by oil exploration. The study, framed within postcolonial theory and the African ecocritical approach, highlighted the adverse effects of oil exploitation on the people and ecosystems of the Niger Delta. It interrogated the extent to which the region's vast natural and human resources have translated into socio-economic development and why conflicts persist despite its wealth. The findings emphasized the role of literature in reflecting and critiquing environmental injustices while offering policy-based and community-driven solutions. However, while the study provided significant literary insight into the Niger Delta crises, it did not deeply explore how contemporary Niger Delta literature influences real-world environmental activism or policy reforms. This presents a research gap that future studies could address by examining the impact of Niger Delta literature on public awareness, government policies, and global environmental advocacy.

Okeke et al. (2022) investigated Oil Terrorism and Politics of Environmental Protection in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Conflict Revisited. The study examined how oil-related conflicts, particularly militant attacks on oil infrastructure, have been used as a means to draw government attention to the urgent need for environmental protection in the Niger Delta. Since the commencement of commercial oil production in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State, in 1958, the region has witnessed increasing acts of oil terrorism, including pipeline attacks, oil barge seizures, and the occupation of oil facilities. These actions stem from grievances over environmental degradation, government neglect, and corporate irresponsibility. The study, grounded in the regulatory capture theory, adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the complex relationship between oil extraction, environmental degradation, and armed resistance. Findings revealed that persistent environmental damage is largely due to weak regulatory enforcement, with oil companies exerting significant influence over government regulators, thereby enabling continued violations of environmental laws. The study also highlighted the perceived complicity of the government in sustaining the conflict through ineffective policies and regulatory failures. To address these challenges, the research recommended stricter enforcement of environmental regulations, the prevention of corporate interference in regulatory processes, and the establishment of local activist-led surveillance teams tasked with independently monitoring and reporting on environmental protection issues to the government. While the study provides crucial insights into the intersection of oil-related violence and environmental governance, it does not fully explore alternative conflict resolution mechanisms that integrate local communities into decision-making processes. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into community-led environmental governance models that can promote both ecological sustainability and long-term peace in the Niger Delta.

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Sam et al. (2022) investigated "Implementing Contaminated Land Remediation in Nigeria: Insights from the Ogoni Remediation Project." The study examined the effectiveness of environmental remediation efforts in the Niger Delta, particularly through the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), which was established in response to the 2011 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report. The report had concluded that past remediation strategies in Nigeria failed to meet international standards, prompting the government to develop a tailored approach to oil-contaminated land and wetland management. However, after more than five years of implementation, HYPREP has struggled to achieve meaningful, sustainable outcomes. The study identified several key challenges affecting the remediation process, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, capacity deficits, weak stakeholder engagement, slow implementation of emergency measures, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure for hazardous waste management. Additionally, HYPREP has not adhered to quality assurance protocols, as it has failed to engage internationally accredited laboratories for environmental sample analysis.

The research suggests that Nigeria can improve its contaminated land management by adopting best practices from successful global remediation initiatives. They argue that a more effective approach would require stronger governance structures, enhanced transparency, and the incorporation of international expertise in land remediation. The study also emphasizes the need for community involvement in environmental decision-making to ensure that local livelihoods are restored alongside land reclamation efforts. While the research provides a critical assessment of HYPREP's shortcomings, it does not deeply explore alternative remediation models that might be more suitable for the region. Future research could focus on the integration of community-led environmental restoration projects and the role of technology in improving remediation efficiency in the Niger Delta.

Ene et al., (2022), conducted a study on criminal association and recidivism in selected prisons in rivers state. This study provides empirical insight into the surge in the incidence of recidivism due to certain factors within the correctional facilities that increase chances of negative criminal association. The study therefore examined the link between criminal association and recidivism using selected prisons in Rivers State, Nigeria. To achieve this aim, data were sourced from the field using questionnaire and Key Persons Interviews (KPIs). To analyze the data, disruptive and inferential statistics along with the thematic method were used. The result shows that criminal association occasioned by overcrowding and lack of proper separation of the different categories of inmates within the selected correctional facilities is responsible for recidivism. However, there is need to investigate other causes as criminal association alone may not be significant enough to birth reoffending. Based on the findings, the study recommends that there should be adequate separation of inmates and provision of more facilities to preclude indiscriminate confinement of inmates that may lead to recidivism.

Vremudia et al., (2022) carried out a Critical Review of Oil Spill Data and Spill Management in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. They noted that readily available and reliable oil spill data is at the forefront of any meaningful attempt to manage the attendant negative effects of oil spills on the environment and livelihoods. They further noted that the management of oil spills in the Niger Delta region (NDR) of Nigeria is an activity that brings together different stakeholders with the sole aim of mitigating and ameliorating the negative impacts of oil spills on the environment. However, it is evident that despite these concerted efforts in the attempts to manage the oil spill problem in the NDR, the problem persists.

New cases of oil spill incidents are reported almost on a weekly basis with the attendant negative consequences accompanied by these spill incidents. Moreover, the vera city of these spill data is viewed with suspicion and apathy. This review was therefore an attempt to appraise the state of oil spill data reporting in the Niger Delta and management efforts geared towards the reduction of oil spill incidents in the region. Data on reported oil spill incidents were reviewed and analyzed. Evidence from the review suggests that effective management of the oil spill problem is hampered by excessive red tapism that exists in the management framework of spills in the region. The review concludes that significant investment in oil infrastructure will provide lasting solutions to the problem and recommends the adoption of powerful modelling software to monitor oil spills as well as the use of geospatial techniques, community engagement and proper environmental surveys of the region.

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Fada and Uchechukwu (2023) researched Oil Exploration, Environmental Degradation, and Future Generations in the Niger Delta: Options for Enforcement of Intergenerational Rights and Sustainable Development Through Legal and Judicial Activism, focusing on the persistent environmental degradation in the Niger Delta caused by oil pollution since the 1960s. The study aimed to achieve several objectives, including examining the impact of oil exploration on the Niger Delta environment from an intergenerational rights perspective, analyzing the role of domestic and foreign legal frameworks in balancing economic development with environmental sustainability, and evaluating the effectiveness of judicial activism in enforcing environmental laws and protecting future generations.

A significant gap identified in the research is the limited exploration of how local communities in the Niger Delta can leverage these judicial precedents to hold oil corporations and government agencies accountable. While the study focuses on legal enforcement, it does not extensively discuss the role of grassroots movements, civil society organizations, and international environmental advocacy in ensuring long-term sustainability. This present research seeks to bridge these gaps by assessing how Niger Delta communities can effectively utilize judicial activism, exploring the role of non-state actors in environmental justice, and proposing actionable policy recommendations for strengthening legal and institutional frameworks for sustainable development and intergenerational equity.

Ejemheare (2023) researched Illegal Oil Bunkering and the Environment of the Niger Delta of Nigeria, analyzing the environmental threats posed by oil exploration and the rise of illegal oil bunkering in the region. A notable research gap in this study is the limited exploration of law enforcement and regulatory mechanisms in curbing illegal oil bunkering. However, while the study highlights job creation as a solution, it does not extensively discuss how government policies or corporate social responsibility programs can integrate local communities into the formal economy. This present research seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the role of law enforcement, regulatory frameworks, and economic diversification in addressing illegal oil bunkering and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta.

Onyido and Umofia (2023) examine the Critical role of Community leadership as the foundation of sustainable community development in Nigeria. The paper explores the concept of community leadership, highlighting the various grassroots leadership structures that exist in Nigerian communities. It identifies who community leaders are, the responsibilities they undertake, and the challenges that hinder their effectiveness. Furthermore, the study discusses strategic solutions to overcome these challenges, emphasizing the importance of leadership training and capacity building for effective governance at the community level. The paper concludes that strong and well-equipped leadership is essential for meaningful community development, stressing the need for proper training of potential leaders before they assume leadership positions.

Azuazu, et al. (2023) researched Challenges and Opportunities for Low-Carbon Remediation in the Niger Delta: Towards Sustainable Environmental Management. Their study responded to the growing need for low-carbon remediation strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while promoting sustainable environmental management in oil-contaminated areas. Within the broader context of sustainable remediation, which balances environmental, economic, and social considerations, the study critically reviewed existing literature to evaluate and compare various low-carbon remediation methods, including bioremediation, phytoremediation, in situ chemical oxidation, soil vapor extraction, and electrokinetic remediation. By analyzing the UK Sustainable Remediation Frameworks (SuRF-UK), the study identified key lessons applicable to the Niger Delta region. Findings indicated that bioremediation and phytoremediation are particularly viable due to their cost-effectiveness and adaptability to local environmental conditions. A proposed framework emphasized the integration of effective remediation technologies with emissions reduction strategies to ensure both environmental restoration and socio-economic benefits for local communities. The study highlighted the urgent need for policymakers to establish and enforce regulations that support sustainable remediation practices, invest in research and development, build stakeholder capacity, and promote collaboration to create a regulatory environment conducive to environmental sustainability. However, while this research provides valuable insights into low-carbon remediation approaches, it does not extensively address the financial and infrastructural constraints that may hinder the large-scale implementation of these technologies in the Niger Delta. This gap presents an opportunity for further research to explore financial models, policy incentives, and institutional

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frameworks that can facilitate the widespread adoption of low-carbon remediation strategies while ensuring long-term environmental and economic sustainability.

Seun et al., (2023) studied Environmental degradation and sustainable peace dialogue in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. They noted that resource-related environmental degradation is a critical issue in Africa, especially in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. Since the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region, unchecked and unregulated exploration has led to environmental stress and degradation. This study deploys the Environmental Peace Building theory and secondary sources of data to interrogate the dynamics and problems of environmental degradation and how this impacts the peace process and human security. This study argues that the inability of the oil multinationals, state and local governments to address resource exploration and environmental degradation remains a potential source of conflict and instability in the region. This has been made worse by persistent and violent demands for social justice and infrastructural development across the region. The inability of the major stakeholders to effectively deploy the use of dialogue and the lack of sincerity in fulfilling peace agreements, flagrant abuse of international and regional frameworks guiding exploration, and displacement have led to armed conflict, proliferation of small and light weapons, bunkering, kidnapping, human insecurity, poverty and chronic environmental degradation. Undoubtedly, there is the need to examine and reengage the oil multinationals on the need to conform to international and local laws guiding exploration while equally ensuring that they partner with the relevant key stakeholders in the quest for sustainable peace and human security.

Uche et al., (2023) studied The Politics of Exclusion & Governance in Nigeria: A Thematic Analysis of the Buhari Administration. This study's overarching purpose is to explore the challenges of imbalance and exclusion in our national life between/among states, social and ethnic/religious groups in light of the recent appointments made by the Buhari administration on diversity in Nigeria. This is due to the fact that people who have been excluded have continued to worry over President Muhammadu Buhari's previous nominations. It is an established fact that good governance is characterized by transparency, responsiveness, participation, the rule of law, equity, and accountability. Its fundamental beliefs consist of accommodating and tolerating the various viewpoints of political opponents through intentional inclusion in the political affairs of one's country. Since the inception of democratic dispensation in 1999, governance in Nigeria has always been based on politics of exclusion, both in terms of the opinions of individuals whose contributions are necessary for the development of the country and in terms of the political appointments of individuals from specific areas/sections. These leaders who have attained State authority, control State resources and begin to decide "who gets what, when, and how" in the political system with little or no regard for the country's overall cohesion and progress. The data in this study were analyzed using a qualitative, descriptive technique. Using elite theory, the paper discovered that unless our leaders eschew ethnic, religious, and partisan politics in governance, the clamour for disintegration and crises caused by these ethnic groups will continue to incite unnecessary distractions that will lead to disunity and underdevelopment in Nigeria.

Sam et al., (2023) studied Inclusive Environmental Decision-making in a Developing Nation: Insights from the Ogoni Remediation Project, Niger Delta, Nigeria. He observed that greater involvement of women is globally believed to enhance environmental management outcomes. Despite being disproportionately affected by environmental degradation primarily caused by oil spills in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, women in the region are often excluded in environmental decision-making processes. Women involved in farming and fishing face increased vulnerability to contaminated land, food insecurity and conflicts driven by environmental degradation. Using a mixed approach, women, lawmakers, policymakers, regulators, civil society organizations, environmental management practitioners, and government agents responsible for environmental remediation were engaged through interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires to examine women’s inclusion in environmental decision-making and governance in the Ogoni contaminated land remediation project in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The results indicate that lack of trust and confidence in drivers of the environmental decision-making process could affect women’s participation and involvement in environmental management. Although cultural beliefs and practices impede the participation of women in the region, their actual participation does not independently translate into inclusion in environmental decision-making due to limited capacity, confidence and trust in the process. Creating platforms for capacity building, developing gender policy, adapting appropriate communication strategies, initiating women networks and strengthening social cohesion could

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enhance women involvement in environmental decision-making in regions with similar cultural context to the Niger Delta region.

Okolo (2024) conducted a study titled NDDC, Conflict, Peace-building and Community Development in the Niger Delta Region, which critically examines the role of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in resolving conflicts, fostering peace, and promoting community development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study aimed to achieve several objectives, including assessing the effectiveness of NDDC interventions in addressing the socio-economic and environmental grievances of the region, evaluating the impact of prolonged peaceful negotiations and violent disruptions led by Niger Delta youths, and determining the extent to which government interventionist agencies have contributed to conflict resolution and peace-building efforts. The population included oil-producing communities, NDDC officials, local activists, and government representatives, with purposive sampling used to select key informants for analysis. A notable gap identified in the research is the lack of a comprehensive evaluation of the long-term impact of NDDC interventions beyond the 2001-2010 period, as well as the absence of a clear framework for sustainable community-led peace-building initiatives. While the study highlights the failures of government agencies, it does not provide an in-depth examination of how community-based strategies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can complement government efforts. The present research seeks to bridge these gaps by conducting a more recent and extensive assessment of NDDC interventions, proposing new models for participatory conflict resolution, and exploring innovative approaches to community-driven development and sustainable peace-building in the Niger Delta.

Nkemdirim and Biyinandam (2024) conducted a study titled Blood and Oil: The Niger Delta's Green Tragedy and the Dark Legacy of Poor Governance, 1956–1998, which investigates the historical trajectory of environmental degradation and socio-political turmoil in the Niger Delta following the discovery of oil in 1956. The study set out to achieve several objectives, including examining the impact of poor environmental governance on the Niger Delta, analyzing the role of militarized mediation in resource conflicts, and assessing the extent to which corporate interests and government policies contributed to environmental destruction. The study employed a historical research design, relying on archival research, document analysis, and interviews with local stakeholders, including activists, community leaders, and former government officials. The population of the study consisted of individuals and institutions directly or indirectly involved in the environmental and political struggles of the Niger Delta, with purposive sampling used to select key informants with firsthand knowledge of the region's historical events. One of the major gaps identified in the research is the lack of focus on post-1998 governance reforms and whether they have effectively addressed the environmental and socio-political challenges inherited from previous decades. In like manner, while the study explores the historical failures of governance, it does not provide a detailed assessment of potential policy interventions for sustainable environmental management. This present research seeks to bridge these gaps by evaluating contemporary governance structures, investigating the effectiveness of existing environmental policies, and proposing actionable strategies for achieving environmental justice, community empowerment, and sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

Sam and Zibima (2024) researched Inclusive Environmental Decision-making in a Developing Nation: Insights from the Ogoni Remediation Project, Niger Delta, Nigeria. Their study examined the critical role of women's involvement in environmental management and how their exclusion affects remediation efforts in the Niger Delta. Despite being disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation, particularly oil spills; women who rely on farming and fishing for survival often find themselves excluded from environmental decision-making processes. Using a mixed-method approach, the research engaged women, lawmakers, policymakers, regulators, civil society organizations, environmental practitioners, and government agents responsible for the Ogoni remediation project through interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires.

Findings revealed that a lack of trust and confidence in decision-making structures significantly affects women's participation. Additionally, cultural barriers, limited capacity, and communication gaps prevent women’s involvement from translating into meaningful inclusion. The study recommended capacity-building initiatives, the development of gender policies, improved communication strategies, and the creation of women’s networks to enhance participation in environmental governance. However, while this research identifies key obstacles to

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women's involvement, it does not extensively explore the specific institutional mechanisms or policy changes that could be implemented to ensure women's sustained and influential participation in environmental governance. This gap presents an opportunity for further research into policy-driven solutions and structural reforms that can institutionalize gender-inclusive decision-making in environmental management, particularly within culturally restrictive settings like the Niger Delta.

Ogugbuaja and Willies (2024) researched The Dynamics of Oil Politics in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Conflict and its International Dimensions. Their study examined the root causes of the Niger Delta conflict, highlighting the interplay between environmental degradation, economic marginalization, political exclusion, and the influence of multinational oil corporations. Additionally, the research explored the international dimensions of the conflict, including global oil market dynamics, geopolitical interests, and international advocacy for environmental and human rights. Using a qualitative methodology that combined historical analysis, policy review, and case study approaches, the study collected data from academic literature, government and non-governmental reports, and interviews with key stakeholders such as community leaders, policymakers, and representatives of multinational oil corporations.

Findings indicated that the Niger Delta conflict is deeply rooted in local grievances over environmental destruction, economic inequality, and political marginalization, which are further exacerbated by weak government policies and the activities of multinational corporations. International factors, such as global energy security concerns and legal actions against oil companies, also play a significant role in shaping the conflict. While efforts such as the Niger Delta Amnesty Program and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives by oil companies have provided some relief, unresolved issues such as corruption, governance deficits, and socioeconomic disparities continue to hinder sustainable peace.

The study concluded that a comprehensive approach involving policy reforms, stronger international collaboration, enforcement of corporate accountability, and inclusive stakeholder engagement is necessary to address both the local and global aspects of the conflict. However, while this research provides a broad overview of the Niger Delta conflict, it does not fully explore the role of community-based conflict resolution mechanisms and grassroots empowerment initiatives in mitigating tensions. This gap presents an opportunity for further research to examine how local community engagement, economic diversification strategies, and indigenous-led environmental governance could contribute to long-term peace and sustainable development in the Niger Delta region.

Amadi (2024) investigated Environmental Security Threats and Policy Response in the Niger Delta, Nigeria (1990-2016). This study examined the growing environmental security threats in the coastal Niger Delta, focusing on issues such as oil spills, water and land pollution, gas flaring, acid rain, and mangrove deforestation. These environmental challenges, largely attributed to the activities of multinational oil corporations (MNOCs) and extensive oil resource exploitation, have led to ecological breakdown, vulnerability, and widespread environmental insecurity since the 1970s when oil became the backbone of Nigeria's economy.

Using a political ecology framework, the study explored the impact of global power asymmetry on natural resource extraction and assessed key indicators of environmental insecurity and the Nigerian state's inadequate policy response. The findings highlighted the persistent failure of state policies in addressing environmental threats effectively, leading to prolonged ecological degradation and socio-economic instability. The study recommended urgent policy reforms, stronger regulatory enforcement, and a more inclusive approach to environmental governance to mitigate the threats posed by oil exploitation in the Niger Delta.

James, Olaniyi, and Olatubosun (2024) investigated Analysing Environmental Sustainability Issues and Conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region. The study examined oil spillage as a critical environmental catastrophe, emphasizing its causes, impacts, and remediation methods. It highlighted that oil spills occur both accidentally and deliberately, with many cases going unreported in developing countries.

Even when spills are acknowledged, efforts to restore the ecosystem are often inadequate. Crude oil spills have severely damaged fragile ecosystems worldwide, with offshore spills posing a significant threat due to their

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harmful effects on marine life. The study reviewed conventional oil spill remediation techniques, including physical, chemical, thermal, and biological methods. It emphasized the preference for biological processes, which utilize native microorganisms in water and soil to detoxify polluted environments. Although biological methods have some limitations, they are considered highly sustainable and cost-effective compared to other remediation techniques. The study concluded that adopting biological remediation strategies could significantly improve environmental sustainability in the Niger Delta while mitigating conflicts arising from ecological degradation.

Fagbamiye and Similoluwa (2024) investigated the Presence of Oil in the Niger Delta: A Blessing or a Curse. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of oil in the Niger Delta, examining both its benefits and drawbacks. The research begins with a historical overview of oil discovery in the region, highlighting the initial optimism and economic potential it brought. The study acknowledges the blessings of oil, emphasizing its contribution to Nigeria's GDP, job creation, and infrastructure development.

However, it also critically assesses the negative consequences, including environmental degradation caused by oil spills, socioeconomic challenges such as wealth inequality and poverty, and the disruption of traditional livelihoods. Additionally, the study explores the security issues linked to oil exploration, particularly the rise of militancy and insurgency in the region. The effectiveness of government policies and multinational corporations' roles in addressing these challenges are also evaluated. Ultimately, the study provides a balanced perspective on the blessings and curses of oil in the Niger Delta, offering insights for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders interested in the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of oil extraction.

Chekwuzitere et al., (2024) conducted a study on blood and oil: The Niger Delta's Tragedy and the dark legacy of poor governance. It was asserted that the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, rich in ecological diversity and natural resources, has long been marred by environmental degradation and socio-political turmoil, particularly following the discovery of oil in 1956. This paper examines the concept of the "Green Tragedy," which encapsulates the devastating consequences of poor environmental governance, militarized mediation, and the exploitation of oil wealth in local communities. By analyzing historical events from 1956 to 1998, including the pivotal execution of environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, the study highlights the complex interplay between environmental policies, corporate interests, and grassroots activism.

Employing a historical analysis grounded in archival research and interviews with local stakeholders, the paper reveals how inadequate regulatory frameworks and government negligence have exacerbated ecological crises and fueled conflict in the region. Ultimately, this research underscores the urgent need for transformative governance that prioritizes environmental justice, community well-being, and sustainable development in the Niger Delta, offering critical insights into the broader implications of resource management in environmentally vulnerable regions worldwide.

James et al., (2024); Onyige, (2019) examine artisanal refining and oil terrorism, demonstrating how weak regulatory frameworks, poor policy implementation, and government complicity have allowed environmental damage to persist. Additionally, scholars like Amadi (2024) and Omotola (2017) critique state responses to environmental insecurity, arguing that interventionist agencies like OMPADEC and NDDC have been largely ineffective due to corruption, political interference, and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Furthermore, empirical studies such as those by Sam et al. (2022) highlight the challenges of land remediation efforts, particularly through HYPREP, emphasizing slow implementation, stakeholder exclusion, and inadequate quality control in environmental restoration projects. These studies collectively underscore the complexity of environmental governance in the Niger Delta, revealing an ongoing struggle between economic interests, environmental sustainability, and community well-being.

The theoretical frameworks employed across these studies vary but predominantly draw from postcolonial theory, political ecology, regulatory capture theory, and the African ecocritical approach. Postcolonial theory, used by Ohagwam (2022) and Amadi & Alapiki (2019), helps explain how colonial and neo-colonial structures continue to shape resource exploitation and environmental neglect in the Niger Delta. Political ecology, as

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discussed by Amadi (2024) and Omotola (2017), situates the Niger Delta crisis within the broader context of global power asymmetries, showing how multinational oil corporations (MNOCs) exploit weak governance systems for profit at the expense of local communities. Regulatory capture theory, utilized by Okeke et al. (2022), provides insights into how oil companies manipulate government regulatory bodies, leading to ineffective environmental policies and enforcement mechanisms. Meanwhile, the African ecocritical approach, as highlighted by Ohagwam (2022), bridges the gap between literature and environmental discourse, illustrating how Niger Delta novels reflect ecological devastation and the socio-political struggles of affected communities. Empirical reviews within these studies provide concrete evidence of environmental degradation, socioeconomic dislocation, and the inefficacy of state interventions. Since the remediation started, studies that have been conducted to gaze the impact of the remediation on the study area have been conducted.

Gilbert (2024) studied Violence, Aggression and Insecurity in the Niger Delta of Nigeria: An Exploratory Study of the Militancy in the Region the Niger Delta region is endowed with oil and natural gas, and contributes enormously to the building of Nigerian economy. He noted that with the Niger Delta's economic contributions, Nigeria rewarded the people in the region with environmental pollution, abject poverty and unemployment. While the oil companies exploited and marginalized the Niger Delta region, the militants emerged with violence and aggression to disrupt oil production, installations and allied facilities in an effort to compel the federal government and oil companies to meet their demands for human capacity building and general infrastructural developments as well as compensations for the widespread exploitations and environmental pollutions that are going on in this region. The failures of the oil companies and the federal government of Nigeria to comply with the demands of the militants fueled violence, aggression and insecurity in the region. This study used secondary data to examine the critical nature of the Niger Delta militants' violence and aggression in Nigeria and its effects on the country's national economy. This paper concludes that the federal government of Nigeria, with the support of the oil companies, should genuinely address the demands of the Niger Delta people and strictly adhere to international environmental standards as regards land and water preservation

Katarina et al., (2024) studied the effects of Political Exclusion: Threatened Needs and Decreased Affiliation with Increased Anger and Antisocial Inclinations. The scholars observed that social exclusion threatens psychological needs satisfaction, increases anger, and can contribute to group polarization. In two studies, they explored how political exclusion (vs. inclusion) influenced American voters' polarization. In Study 1 (N = 135, 60.7% Female, 61.5% White; Age M=19.63), young adults were included or excluded in Cyberball from their political outgroup. In Study 2 (N=316, 72.5% Female, 63.0% White; Age M=19.03), Biden and Trump supporters were excluded or included in Cyberball from their political ingroup or outgroup during the 2020 election. Participants excluded (vs. included) from the political outgroup reported lower needs satisfaction (Study 1: $\eta p\ 2 = 0.29$, Study 2: $\eta p\ 2 = 0.35$), more anger (Study 2: $\eta p\ 2 = 0.04$), less interest in outgroup affiliation (Study 1: $\eta p\ 2 = 0.03$) and increased interest in outgroup antisociality (Study 2: $\eta p\ 2 = 0.01$). Ingroup exclusion had mixed effects, and liberals (Biden supporters) and conservatives (Trump supporters) reported differences in exclusion responses. It was concluded that political exclusion may initiate a cycle of polarization and exclusion by threatening psychological needs and increasing anger.

Aneijionu (2025) researched Hydrocarbon Pollution in the Niger Delta: Geographies of Impacts and Appraisal of Lapses in Extant Legal Framework, analyzing the environmental consequences of hydrocarbon extraction in the region. The study aimed to examine the extent of pollution caused by oil spills, gas flaring, and pipeline explosions while assessing the inadequacies of existing legal frameworks in addressing environmental damage. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining spatial analysis, environmental impact assessments, and legal policy reviews to evaluate pollution trends and regulatory shortcomings. While the paper highlights legal deficiencies, it does not comprehensively assess the role of local communities, environmental advocacy groups, or international legal instruments in enforcing compliance. This present research seeks to bridge these gaps by exploring the effectiveness of legal enforcement, corporate accountability measures, and community-based strategies in addressing hydrocarbon pollution in the Niger Delta.

Collins (2025) investigated Environmental Degradation, Social Disequilibrium, and the Dilemma of Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The study explored how development policies have consistently marginalized the Niger Delta region, failing to improve the welfare of its people. It argued that multinational oil

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companies, driven by exploitative tendencies, have indiscriminately extracted fossil fuels, leading to severe environmental degradation and undermining the sustainability of the region's natural resources. The study linked the ongoing crisis of youth restiveness and resistance to these broader developmental challenges. It emphasized that social issues such as the rise of miscreants (commonly known as "area boys"), juvenile delinquency, and other deviant behaviors cannot be separated from the environmental problems caused by poor development initiatives. The study concluded that the Niger Delta's development dilemma is deeply rooted in policies that neglect the region's ecological and social well-being, calling for more sustainable and inclusive development strategies to address the underlying causes of social instability.

Rhuks et al., (2025) conducted a study on Forging Peaceful Relationships between Oil-Companies and Host-Communities in Nigeria's Delta Region: A Stakeholder's Perspective to Corporate Social Responsibility. The purpose of this paper is to determine the level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that is expected of oil-multinationals by the host-communities in which they operate in Nigeria's oil-rich Delta region. It also suggests how the aggressive opposition of the host-community to the oil exploration activities of oil companies may be curbed. The research method was purely review of extant literatures and deductive arguments that will give insights to how conflict situations arising from denial of rights can be resolved through CSR and stakeholder's perspective. The paper concluded that the major determinant of success of most companies in the world rest in the performance of their CSR to the host-community, stakeholders and the society in general. The oil-companies operating in the Niger Delta region have to re-assess their CSR objectives towards improving their delivery to the intended beneficiaries otherwise the pervasive violent conflicts in the region will persist with adverse consequences on the corporate image, reduced profits of the oil-companies and high cost of the product due to disruptions in production. The paper usefully points out that the Niger Delta region that hosts Nigeria's oil upstream sector has been enmeshed in violent conflicts essentially due to the adverse socio-environmental effects the industry has on their communities. The companies however assert that they operate as responsible corporate entities and as such their operations and activities benefits their host-communities rather than induce violent conflicts.

Akpuru et al., (2025) studied the politics of Nigeria-UNEP Partnership on Environmental Degradation in The Niger Delta: A Critical Re-Examination of Facts. They asserted that environmental degradation has been one of the major sources of conflict and wars globally. It is also one of such issues that has greatly affected human rights in all continents of the world. No doubt, environmental rights are fundamental to the totality of human rights and this therefore implies that every human being must first exist, live and depend on the natural environment for continued survival. The United Nations Human Rights Council declared that human beings all over the world are entitled to a clean, healthy, safe and sustainable environment. Quite unfortunately, it has been observed with dismay that the Nigeria's Niger Delta environment is most adversely affected since the discovery of crude oil and its exploitation and exploration and this has ultimately generated serious conflict situations in various oil bearing communities in the region, notably Ogoniland. Arising from a doctoral thesis submitted to Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt, this paper presents a critical re-examination of the fundamental facts vis-a-vis the politics of Nigeria-UNEP partnership on environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. For example, the paper posited that the minority agitation and environmental cum socio-political experiences of the Ogoni people were shaped by three major concomitant issues that eventually led to UNEP's invitation by the Nigerian state, and the subsequent production of the popularly referred to as the "Ogoni UNEP report" in 2011. In conclusion, the paper clearly recommended that the Nigerian state should henceforth pursue a more strategic foreign policy option predicated on a continued environmental diplomacy as well as a consciously aggressive environmental advocacy for the purposes of discouraging all and sundry (especially the international oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region), from the indiscriminate violation of the natural environment and extant environmental laws in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed research design, which involves the collection of data at a single point in time. A mixed approach is suitable because it allows for the analysis of patterns, relationships, and correlations between

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environmental remediation projects and communal conflicts in the region without requiring long-term observations. This design is particularly effective for studies assessing the perceptions, experiences, and socio-political dynamics within communities affected by environmental degradation and subsequent remediation efforts.

The justification is based on factors such as the nature of the study, time constraints, cost-effectiveness, and the objectives of the research. A mixed research design is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to analyze patterns, relationships, and community perceptions regarding environmental remediation projects and their influence on communal conflicts at a single point in time. Given the complex socio-political and environmental context of the Niger Delta (especially Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom States), this design enables the collection of diverse perspectives from various stakeholders, including community members, government agencies, oil companies, and environmental scientists, and activists, without requiring long-term observations.

Area of the Study

Ogoniland is situated in an area east of Port Harcourt in Rivers State. Because of their agricultural economy and an increasing population, most of the rain forest that once covered the area has been cleared for farming. The area forms part of the coastal plains, featuring terraces with gentle slopes intersected by deep valleys that carry water intermittently. Joshua Project (2026), Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People. The Ogoni are a distinct people who have lived in the Niger Delta for more than 500 years. The Ogoni are an agricultural and fishing society, living in close-knit rural communities in one of the most densely populated areas of Africa. Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests the Ogoni have inhabited the Niger Delta for up to 500 years. They established an organized social system which worked under a monarchy and under which men and women of courage and ability enjoyed a special status. During the slave trade, Ogoniland lay on the slave route from the hinterland to the coastal slave markets. However, no Ogoni man or woman was taken as a slave. Marriage with a neighbour, except the Ibibio, was forbidden by Ogoni customs and tradition. This way, the Ogoni people were able to live in relative isolation during the era of the slave trade. When other forms of trade were introduced into the region in the second half of the 19th century, weapons were purchased and wars became the order of the day. After the Berlin Treaty of 1885, Nigeria came under British colonial rule, but it was not until 1901 that British forces arrived in Ogoniland. The cultural differences led to resistance on the side of the Ogoni people, but as they were not strong enough to resist the British patrols the Ogoni people were finally subjugated in 1914. The British saw Nigeria in terms of three major ethnic groups: the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo, thereby ignoring more then 250 smaller peoples, including the Ogoni. The Ogoni were regarded with contempt by all other groups in the Delta region and were often positioned at the bottom of the social ladder.

The true origins of the Ogoni people are not very well-known. One theory is that they migrated into the area from across the Imo River. A second theory is that the Ogoni came in boats from Ghana and settled in the southern part of the area. Believers in this theory point to the name by which most of the Ogoni peoples call themselves (Khana) as a pointer to the Ghana origins of the Ogoni people.

Ogoniland consists of six kingdoms: Babbe, Eleme, Gokana, Ken-Khana, Nyo-Khana, and Tai. Within Ogoniland four main languages are spoken, which, although related, are mutually unintelligible. Linguistic experts classify the Ogoni languages of Khana, Gokana, and Eleme as a distinct group within the Beneu-Congo branch of African languages or, more particularly, as a branch in the New Beneu-Congo family.

Despite the introduction of Christianity, many aspects of the indigenous Ogoni culture and religion are still evident. The land on which they live and the rivers that surround them are very important to the Ogoni people. They not only provided enough food, they are also believed to be a god and are worshiped as such. This explains why the Ogoni people have so many difficulties with the degradation of the environment as a result of oil pollution. The fruit of the land, especially yams, are honoured in festivals. The annual festival of the Ogoni people is held during the period of the yam harvest. The planting season is not just a period of agricultural activity, but it is a spiritual, religious and social occasion. 'Tradition' in Ogoni means in the local tongue (doonu kuneke) the honouring of the land. The Ogoni people believe that the soul of every human being has the ability

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to leave its human form and enter into that of an animal, taking on the shape of that animal. These characteristics show that nature is very important for the Ogoni people.

The Ogoni are an agricultural and fishing society. Yam and cassava farming are important ways of making a living, although the revenues of these products are not very high. The most important export product of Nigeria is oil, but the Ogoni people have never profited from these exports. Once the 'food basket' for the Niger Delta and beyond, Ogoniland's agricultural production has now been severely reduced. This is partly due to loss of farmlands through oil pollution and partly to soil fertility problems arising from acid/alkaline rain caused by gas flaring. Large areas of fresh and salt water resources as fishing grounds have also been rendered useless by oil spills. Food is becoming increasingly expensive and potential farmers are too poor to pay for seeds and labour. Poverty has worsened in the Ogoni areas during the last years. Nearly all oil workers are people coming from outside the area whom the local people have had to compete with for basic commodities. Besides the oil installations and refineries there are no manufacturing industries in Ogoni to reduce unemployment. This situation increasingly results in psycho-social degradation.

There are no government projects to address the problems of development in Ogoni-land. Health facilities are almost non-existent and school buildings are collapsing with the classrooms and laboratories empty. Attracting foreign aid to Ogoni-land has been difficult and a couple of community self-help initiatives by the people were branded 'MOSOP-inspired' and stopped.

Ogoni-land is in total economic isolation by the government and most roads have been left to wear, making transportation extremely difficult. The environmental costs of the oil exploiration have been and still are, very high. The agricultural and fishing communities experienced huge oil spills and pollution of drinking water, fishing grounds and farmlands. Large flares burnt gas from the oil extraction process, illuminating the sky day and night and polluting the air. The 1970s brought increasing activity from the oil companies, claiming more space in an already crowded territory, and resulting in a deteriorating environment and in decreasing crop yields and fish catches.

The study was carried out in oil impacted communities in Ogoni land within Niger Delta States in Nigeria which would be GOKANA Local Government Area: Bodo, Mogho, K Dere, B Dere, Bomu, Gbe, Kpor, Biara, Bera, Bomu (shoreline area). TAI Local Government Area: Korokoro, Botem, Kpite, Gbene ue, Ueken, Sime, Kira, Gio, Baralue, Horo, Kebara Kira, Kporghor. KHANA Local Government Area: Kpean, Kwawa. ELEME Local Government Area: Aleto, Alesa, Ogale, Ebubu, Agbeta, Akpajo, Alode, Aluejor Onne, Ochanni and Eteo. These areas were selected due to their significant involvement in oil exploration, environmental degradation, and communal conflicts linked to resource control and environmental remediation projects and this area was purposively selected because that is the only place in Niger Delta that comprehensive remediation has been done beyond the pocket of remediation exercise in other Niger Delta State.

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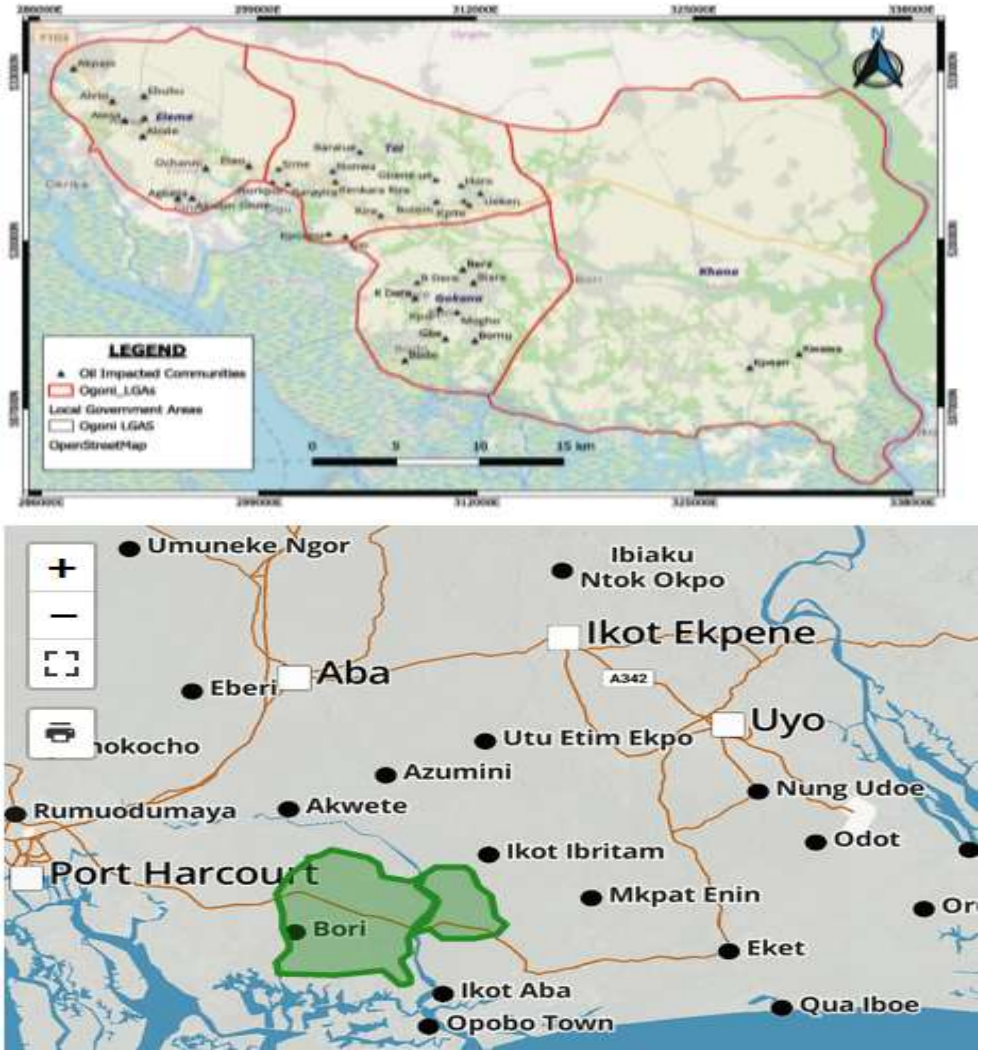

Fig. 3.1: Oil Impacted Communities in Ogoni

Source: Openstreetmap

Rivers South-East Senatorial Zone

The Rivers South-East Senatorial Zone is located in Rivers State, Nigeria. It lies approximately between latitudes 4°30' and 5°30' N and longitudes 6°30' and 7°30' E. This zone is part of the coastal Niger Delta region, characterized by low-lying terrain, riverine swamps, and mangrove forests. The climate of the region is tropical rainforest, with high humidity and an annual rainfall of over 2,500 mm. The zone is subject to flooding, erosion, and oil pollution, which have severely impacted both the agriculture and fishing industries. The region is crisscrossed by rivers such as the Bonny River, Andoni River, and Imo River, which serve as major water transportation routes.

Rivers South-East is highly industrialized, with numerous oil and gas facilities operated by multinational corporations like Shell, Total, and Agip. These companies have played a significant role in environmental degradation, leading to loss of arable land, water pollution, and destruction of livelihoods. Oil spills and gas flaring are common issues, resulting in frequent communal conflicts between oil companies and local communities. This senatorial zone was chosen because Eleme, Tai, Khana, and Gokana LGAs are among the most affected by oil spillage pollution. Reports from Punch News (2024) confirm that soil and groundwater contamination in these areas have reached critical levels, making them suitable for studying the impact of environmental remediation projects. Additionally, Shell's failure to clean up spills adequately has led to prolonged communal conflicts between the host communities and the government.

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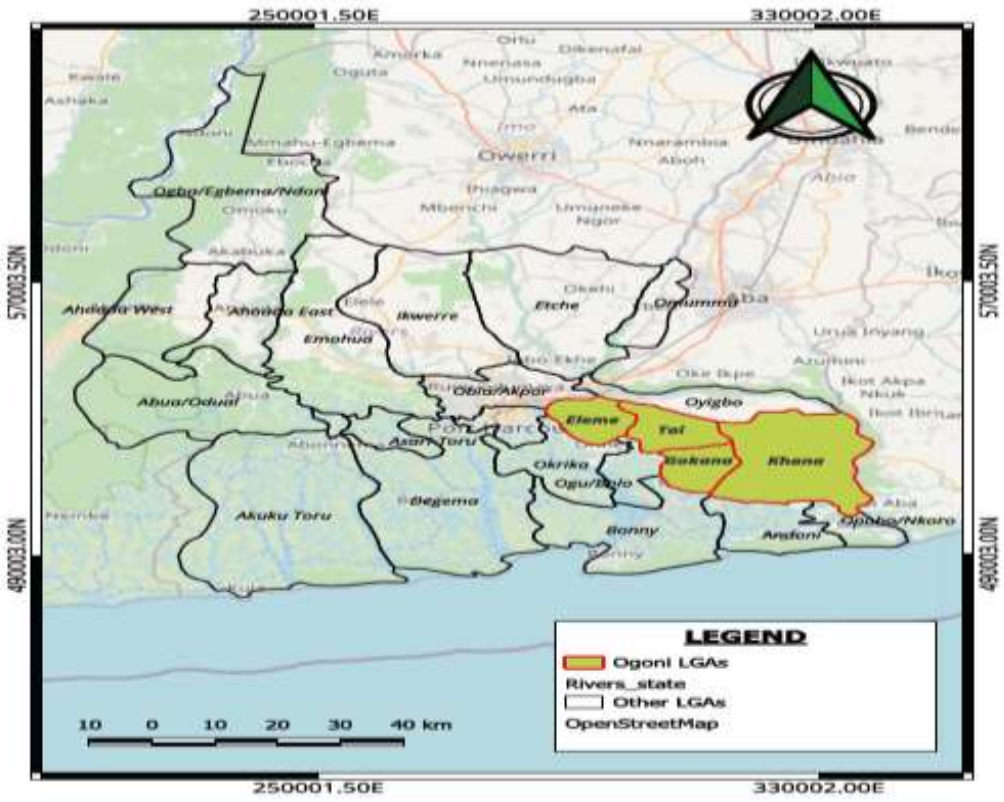

Fig. 3.2: Map of Rivers State showing the Ogoni LGAs

Source: Openstreetmap

Population of the Study

The population of the study was from Rivers South-East Senatorial Zone (Eleme, Khana, Tai and Gokana Local Government Areas). The participants was divided among the study areas based on their relative exposure to oil pollution and involvement in remediation activities. The participants were Remediation Agencies (HYPREP), Government officials, Traditional Rulers, (community-based organization, community development committees, member of selected communities, Youths, Women, environmental regulators and experts from NOSDRA (especially for Rivers South Senatorial Zone), environmental NGOs. The study focus on 1,105,299 individual been the projected population figures estimated 2022 (NPC) of the four Local Government Area in Ogoni Land.

Table 3.1: Projected Population Figure as at 2022 Estimated

S/N	**LGA**	**2006**	**2022**
1	Khana	292,924	421,300
2	Gokana	228,828	336,300
3	Eleme	190,194	347,526
4	Tai	120,00	173,000
	Total	**931,946**	**1,105,299**

Sample and Sampling Technique

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This study employed the multi stage sampling technique, a non-probability sampling method, to intentionally select respondents who have direct knowledge and experience with environmental remediation projects and communal conflicts in Ogoni. The study required specific groups of individuals who have been affected by oil spills or involved in environmental remediation efforts. Sample size of 600 was randomly selected in this study.

Table 3.2: Sample size for the study

Study Area	**Remediation Agencies (HYPREP)**	**Government Officials**	**Traditional Rulers**	**Community Based Organization**	**Community Development Committees**	**Member of Selected Communities**		**Total Respondents**
						Youths	**Women**	
Gokana Local Government Area	15	20	10	25	20	50	60	200
Tai Local Government Area	10	12	8	13	10	55	32	140
Khana Local Government Area	5	10	6	8	8	40	23	100
Eleme Local Government Area	11	13	11	14	11	60	40	160
Total	**41**	**55**	**35**	**60**	**49**	**205**	**155**	**600**

Source: Researcher's Field Wo

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to gather relevant information from respondents in the selected study areas. The questionnaire served as the primary tool for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring that the perspectives of various stakeholders, Community Leaders, environmental regulators and experts, environmental NGOs, and community members, are adequately captured. The study relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source involved firsthand data collected through the administration of the structured questionnaire to respondents in the selected communities across Ogoni Local Government Area, Rivers State. This approach is essential in obtaining real-time insights from individuals who are directly affected by oil spills, involved in environmental remediation projects, or engaged in managing communal conflicts. The use of a questionnaire allows for standardized responses, making it easier to compare results across different locations and categories of respondents. In addition to primary data collection, secondary sources were utilized to provide a contextual and theoretical foundation for the study. These sources included existing literature such as books, journal articles, official government reports, policy documents, environmental impact assessments, and previous research studies on oil spills, environmental remediation, and community conflicts in the Niger Delta region.

The questionnaire was divided into several sections, each addressing different aspects of the research objectives. The first section focused on demographic information, including age, gender, educational background, occupation, and community of residence. The second section examined the extent of oil spillage in the respondents' communities, assessing their experiences with environmental degradation and the impact on their livelihoods.

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The third section delved into environmental remediation efforts, assessing the effectiveness of past and ongoing cleanup projects, the involvement of oil companies and government agencies, and community perceptions of these interventions. Respondents were asked to rate the level of transparency, efficiency, and sustainability of remediation projects in their areas. The fourth section focused on communal conflicts, exploring how environmental degradation and oil-related disputes contribute to social unrest. Questions examined the frequency of conflicts, major causes, and the role of different stakeholders in conflict resolution. The questionnaire predominantly used a Likert scale format, where respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements. Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire was pretested in a small sample within the study area to identify potential ambiguities, ensure clarity, and refine questions as needed. The feedback from the pilot test helped to improve the reliability of the instrument before it was distributed to the larger sample.

Sources of Data Collection

Given the scope of the study, a multiple case study approach was employed, focusing on three key locations within the Niger Delta region, which is significantly affected by oil pollution. The study utilized a quantitative research strategy, integrating various methods of data collection to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants and enhance the credibility of the findings. This approach, known as triangulation (Leckner & Severson, 2019), involves gathering data from diverse sources and using different methods to ensure a more holistic view.

As a multiple case study, semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection, supplemented by field observations documented through field notes. This combination allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences. Peck & Mummery (2022) argued that human experiences are subjective and should be understood from the perspectives of the participants themselves. These tools offered insights into how individuals interpreted their involvement with environmental remediation issues and communal conflicts in the Niger Delta.

Interview

Interviews were the core data collection tool for this qualitative study. They were essential for gathering detailed, personal accounts and perspectives on the complex issues of environmental remediation and communal conflicts in the Niger Delta. Interviews allowed participants to share their stories, insights, and personal experiences in a flexible and open-ended manner. This aligned with the views of Kerwin & Reynoso (2021), who highlighted the importance of interviews in understanding individuals' subjective realities. Interviews provide an opportunity to explore the underlying motivations, actions, and attitudes of the participants in ways that structured surveys could not.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four participants from each of the three selected locations. The interview questions were open-ended to encourage participants to expand on their thoughts and provide in-depth responses. The researcher ensured that the interview environment was relaxed and non-threatening, fostering honest and open discussions. Sensitive or leading questions were avoided to minimize bias.

The interviews were guided by a schedule based on the literature review, which explored how local communities perceived the impact of environmental remediation project on their lives and how they responded to divestment movements. The same set of questions was asked of each participant to facilitate comparison and analysis of their responses. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for accurate analysis, ensuring that the participants' voices and perspectives were faithfully represented.

Observation

In addition to interviews, observation was employed as a complementary technique to capture non-verbal information that participants may not have expressed during interviews. Observations provided insights into the

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participants' actual behaviour, interactions, and the physical environment in which they lived and worked, which revealed important context about their responses to environmental remediation project and related issues. Field notes were taken during and after the interviews to document the researcher's observations, providing additional context that enriched the verbal data.

The observation process focused on identifying discrepancies between what participants said and how they behaved, as well as capturing social settings and interactions that may have influenced their responses. For instance, observing community meetings or protests revealed the level of engagement with environmental justice causes, while interactions between community members and oil company representatives exposed underlying power dynamics. This method helped present a fuller, more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand.

Method for Data Collection

The procedure for data collection in this study was systematic and structured to ensure accuracy and reliability in obtaining relevant information from respondents. The data collection process began with an initial phase of community engagement, where the researcher formally introduced the study to key stakeholders such as traditional rulers, community leaders, youth groups, and local government officials in the selected study areas. After securing the necessary approvals and support from community leaders, the structured questionnaire was distributed to the selected respondents in Rivers South-East (Eleme, Tai, Khana, and Gokana LGAs). The questionnaires were administered in person by the researcher and trained research assistants to ensure proper guidance is provided to respondents where necessary. Given the literacy variation among respondents, oral interviews were conducted in cases where respondents may have difficulty filling out the questionnaire themselves. This approach ensured that all selected participants, regardless of literacy level, can provide accurate responses. The data collection process was expected to last three to four weeks, ensuring that all targeted participants have the opportunity to provide their input. Upon completion, the filled questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, and stored securely to maintain data integrity.

Validity / Reliability of Instrument

Ensuring the validity and reliability of this study was crucial for its trustworthiness and rigour. Validity referred to whether the research accurately measured what it intended to measure, ensuring that the research instruments aligned with the study's objectives. Reliability refers to the consistency of findings over time, ensuring that similar results would be obtained if the study were repeated under similar conditions.

Enhance both validity and reliability, the researcher employed triangulation, using multiple data collection methods (interviews, observations, and field notes) to cross-check and validate findings. This approach provided a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the research topics. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the researcher reflected on their own biases and assumptions during the process to ensure that the findings were grounded in the participants' lived experiences rather than the researcher's interpretations. A copy of the questionnaire was submitted to the supervisor and other experts to screen the items on their appropriateness, structure and language usage before its administration. A test-retest method was used. This implies that the instruments was administered to the respondents and after one week, the same instruments were also administered to the same group of respondents.

The result of the pre-test and re-test for the validity and the reliability of the instrument shows that Cronbach's

Alpha is 0.93 which indicates or shows a high level of internal consistency of the respondents for our scales for these specific samples.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics, with a primary focus on the mean to summarize and interpret the responses. Descriptive statistics helped in identifying trends and patterns in the responses related to oil spills, environmental remediation projects, and communal conflicts. The mean was used to determine the average perception of respondents on key variables, such as the effectiveness of

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environmental remediation efforts and the extent to which oil spills have contributed to community conflicts. The data was coded and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), where it was cleaned and organized for analysis. The results were then presented in tables, charts, and graphs to enhance clarity and ease of interpretation. This method of analysis allowed for a clear and structured presentation of findings, making it easier to draw conclusions and make policy recommendations based on the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles guiding the study includes informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. Participants were adequately informed about the purpose of the study, and that their rights were respected throughout the research process. Ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were strictly observed throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation of Results

This chapter presents the results of the study "Environmental Remediation Projects and Communal Conflicts in the Niger Delta", based on data generated from 600 respondents drawn from four Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Ogoniland, namely Gokana (200), Tai (140), Khana (100), and Eleme (160). The respondents comprised seven stakeholder groups: remediation agencies (HYPREP), government officials, traditional rulers, community-based organizations (CBOs), community development committees (CDCs), women groups, and youths.

A mean score analysis was employed to analyze responses to Sections B–F of the questionnaire, corresponding to Research Questions 1–5. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1). A decision benchmark mean of 2.50 was adopted. Mean scores ≥ 2.50 indicate agreement with the statement, while mean scores < 2.50 indicate disagreement.

Table 4.1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (n = 600)

Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender		
Male	360	60.0
Female	225	37.5
Prefer not to say	15	2.5
Total	**600**	**100.0**
Age Group		
18–25 years	120	20.0
26–35 years	180	30.0
36–45 years	150	25.0
46–55 years	95	15.8

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56 years and above	55	9.2
Total	**600**	**100.0**
Educational Level		
No formal education	90	15.0
Primary education	140	23.3
Secondary education	185	30.8
Tertiary education	185	30.8
Total	**600**	**100.0**
Occupation		
Farmer	160	26.7
Trader	145	24.2
Civil servant	170	28.3
Others	125	20.8
Total	**600**	**100.0**
Stakeholder Group		
Remediation Agencies (HYPREP)	60	10.0
Government Officials	75	12.5
Traditional Rulers	65	10.8
CBOs	90	15.0
CDCs	85	14.2
Women Groups	115	19.2
Youth Groups	110	18.3
Total	**600**	**100.0**

The table above presents the demographic characteristics of respondents (n = 600) who participated in the

study on “Environmental Remediation Projects and Communal Conflicts in the Niger Delta.” Percentages are based on the total number of valid responses for each category and may not sum to exactly 100% due to rounding. Respondents who selected “prefer not to say” were included to ensure ethical compliance, anonymity, and inclusiveness. The diverse demographic and stakeholder representation was intended to capture varied perspectives relevant to environmental remediation processes and communal conflict dynamics in the Niger Delta region

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From the table, male respondents dominate the sample, reflecting prevailing leadership structures, while women constitute a significant minority. Majority of respondents are within the active age bracket most affected by environmental conflicts. Educational levels suggest sufficient awareness to engage critically with remediation initiatives. Livelihoods are largely environment-dependent, increasing sensitivity to remediation outcomes. Youths and women groups form a substantial proportion of stakeholders, highlighting their importance in conflict dynamics.

Table 4.2: Mean Score Analysis of the Effect of Historical Grievances on Community Trust and Perceptions of Environmental Remediation Projects

Item	Statement (Summary)	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Unresolved historical injustices undermine trust in remediation projects	285	210	75	30	3.25	Accepted
2	Past grievances are often ignored in remediation planning	270	225	70	35	3.22	Accepted
3	Lack of redress for past harms breeds mistrust toward agencies	300	205	65	30	3.29	Accepted
4	Acknowledging past harms builds trust in remediation initiatives	320	200	55	25	3.36	Accepted
5	Ignoring historical issues fuels community resistance	295	215	60	30	3.29	Accepted
6	Past experiences shape community perceptions of remediation projects	310	210	55	25	3.34	Accepted
7	Apologies and compensation increase community cooperation	305	215	50	30	3.33	Accepted
8	Communities feel neglected due to unresolved historical grievances	290	220	60	30	3.28	Accepted
9	Dialogue on past injustices is necessary for project success	330	195	50	25	3.38	Accepted
10	Historical reflection improves trust in remediation agencies	325	200	50	25	3.38	Accepted
	Grand/ average					**3.31**	**Accepted**

A 4-point Likert scale was adopted (SA=4, A=3, D=2, SD=1). A mean score of 2.50 and above indicates agreement (Accepted), while a mean score below 2.50 indicates disagreement (Rejected).

The results presented in the table address the research objective of examining the effects of neglecting historical grievances on community trust and perceptions of environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta. Overall, the findings reveal a strong consensus among respondents that unresolved historical injustices significantly influence community trust, cooperation, and attitudes toward remediation initiatives.

All ten questionnaire items recorded mean scores above the decision benchmark, with values ranging from 3.22 to 3.38, resulting in an overall grand mean of 3.31. This indicates a general agreement that neglecting historical grievances undermines trust in remediation agencies and projects. Specifically, high levels of agreement with statements such as “Unresolved historical injustices undermine trust in remediation projects” and “Lack of redress for past harms breeds mistrust toward agencies” suggest that past environmental and socio-economic injustices remain central to how communities evaluate current remediation efforts.

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Furthermore, respondents strongly agreed that acknowledging past harms, engaging in dialogue, and providing apologies or compensation can improve trust and cooperation. Items relating to the need for historical reflection and open dialogue (Items 9 and 10) recorded the highest mean scores (3.38), underscoring the importance of inclusive engagement and recognition of past wrongs in fostering community acceptance and project success. This reflects the view that remediation initiatives are not merely technical or environmental interventions but are also deeply embedded in social and historical contexts. The acceptance of all items also demonstrates that past experiences of neglect and marginalization continue to shape community perceptions and can fuel resistance when remediation projects are perceived as insensitive to historical realities. Therefore, the findings imply that failure to address historical grievances may exacerbate mistrust and communal tensions, potentially leading to conflicts that undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of remediation projects in the Niger Delta.

The results in the table therefore confirm that addressing historical grievances through acknowledgment, dialogue, and redress mechanisms is essential for building trust, improving community perceptions, and ensuring the successful implementation of environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta.

The results of the focal group discussion also collaborate the results above. Communities were not carried (imperialism) there was exclusion in the Niger Delta. There were so many grievances because the government were not found to be sincere. The respondents had it that their people lost their livelihood because they were displaced from the land the major source of their livelihood. The aforementioned has however been restored through mangrove restoration. The respondents also perceive that the activities of the IOCs is detrimental to their environment which affected their economic and environment which caused the death of Ken Saro Wiwa and others. They also responded that the issue of oil production with federal government and IOCs has been mistrust.

Table 4.3: Mean Score Analysis of the Impact of Execution Delays on Community Dissatisfaction and Conflict Escalation

Item	Statement (Summary)	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Delays frustrate host communities	315	205	55	25	3.35	Accepted
2	Delays create tension between youths and elders	290	215	65	30	3.28	Accepted
3	Project delays signal corruption or incompetence	300	210	60	30	3.30	Accepted
4	Timely delivery of projects reduces protests	325	200	50	25	3.38	Accepted
5	Slow remediation projects reduce community interest	285	220	65	30	3.27	Accepted
6	Unmet expectations due to delays escalate conflicts	310	205	55	30	3.33	Accepted
7	Youths are the most affected by project delays	305	210	60	25	3.33	Accepted
8	Missed timelines cause community disillusionment	320	205	50	25	3.37	Accepted
9	Poor communication about delays worsens distrust	330	195	45	30	3.38	Accepted
10	Regular progress updates help manage expectations	335	190	45	30	3.38	Accepted
	Grand/ average					**3.34**	**Accepted**

The table above presents respondents' perceptions of how execution delays in environmental remediation projects influence community dissatisfaction and the escalation of conflicts in the Niger Delta, in line with the stated research objective. The results indicate a strong consensus that project delays are a critical source of frustration, mistrust, and social tension within host communities.

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All ten items recorded mean scores above the acceptance threshold, with values ranging from 3.27 to 3.38 and a grand mean of 3.34, signifying general agreement among respondents. High agreement with statements such as "Delays frustrate host communities" (Mean = 3.35) and "Unmet expectations due to delays escalate conflicts" (Mean = 3.33) highlights how prolonged timelines undermine community patience and heighten the risk of disputes. These delays are perceived not merely as technical setbacks but as triggers for emotional and social reactions that can fuel communal unrest.

The findings also show that delays exacerbate internal community tensions, particularly between youths and elders (Mean = 3.28), and disproportionately affect youths (Mean = 3.33), who are often more vocal and active in expressing dissatisfaction. Additionally, respondents agreed that prolonged delays can create perceptions of corruption or incompetence among implementing agencies (Mean = 3.30), thereby eroding institutional credibility and trust.

Conversely, items related to timely project delivery and effective communication recorded some of the highest mean scores. Statements such as "Timely delivery of projects reduces protests" and "Regular progress updates help manage expectations" (Means = 3.38) underscore the importance of adherence to timelines and transparent communication in mitigating dissatisfaction and preventing conflict escalation. Poor communication about delays (Mean = 3.38) was also strongly associated with worsening distrust, suggesting that uncertainty and lack of information intensify negative community reactions.

Overall, the acceptance of all items demonstrates that execution delays, when combined with inadequate communication and unmet expectations, significantly contribute to community disillusionment, dissatisfaction, and conflict escalation. The findings imply that effective project management, timely execution, and regular stakeholder engagement are essential strategies for reducing tensions and ensuring the successful implementation of environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta.

From the focal group discussion, the respondents have it that Sometimes, contractors don't pay early so they protest. They are also aggrieved because they believed that they are sometimes manipulated by the elites such that even when the state wanted to effect change but there were pockets of elites who thwarts the process. Exclusion can also disrupt the process. For instance, a community was found to set hyprep vehicle ablaze but recently hyprep has over 20 projects in that community

Table 4.4: Mean Score Analysis of the Effect of Community Exclusion from Policy-Making on Communal Resistance

Item	Statement (Summary)	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Communities are excluded from remediation policy decisions	310	210	55	25	3.34	Accepted
2	Local leaders are rarely consulted during project planning	295	215	60	30	3.29	Accepted
3	Community exclusion increases resistance to projects	320	205	50	25	3.37	Accepted
4	Inclusive decision-making ensures project success	335	195	45	25	3.38	Accepted
5	Youths are excluded from policy dialogue	300	215	60	25	3.32	Accepted
6	Women are excluded from consultation meetings	285	220	65	30	3.27	Accepted
7	Exclusion of communities breeds suspicion and hostility	325	200	50	25	3.38	Accepted
8	Inclusion of communities builds trust and cooperation	330	200	45	25	3.39	Accepted

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9	Traditional authorities have a critical role in policy decisions	315	205	55	25	3.35	Accepted
10	Community exclusion often leads to protests and conflict	340	190	45	25	3.41	Accepted
	Grand/ average					**3.35**	**Accepted**

The table 4.4 above presents respondents' views on the extent to which the exclusion of local communities from policy-making processes contributes to communal resistance in environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta, in line with the stated research objective. The findings demonstrate a strong consensus that limited community participation in decision-making significantly undermines project acceptance and fuels conflict.

All the ten items recorded mean scores above the acceptance benchmark, ranging from 3.27 to 3.41, with a grand mean of 3.35. This indicates that respondents generally agreed that communities are often excluded from remediation policy decisions and that such exclusion has negative consequences. High agreement with statements such as "Communities are excluded from remediation policy decisions" (Mean = 3.34) and "Local leaders are rarely consulted during project planning" (Mean = 3.29) suggests that remediation initiatives are frequently perceived as top-down interventions with limited grassroots input.

The results further reveal that exclusion directly contributes to resistance and hostility. Items stating that "Community exclusion increases resistance to projects" (Mean = 3.37) and "Community exclusion often leads to protests and conflict" (Mean = 3.41) recorded some of the highest mean scores, underscoring the link between marginalization and communal unrest. Respondents also agreed that the exclusion of specific groups - particularly youths (Mean = 3.32) and women (Mean = 3.27) - weakens the legitimacy of remediation policies and deepens feelings of alienation within host communities. Conversely, strong agreement was recorded for statements emphasizing the benefits of inclusion. Items such as "Inclusive decision-making ensures project success" (Mean = 3.38) and "Inclusion of communities builds trust and cooperation" (Mean = 3.39) highlight the perceived value of participatory approaches in fostering ownership, trust, and collaboration. The recognition of the critical role of traditional authorities (Mean = 3.35) further reflects the importance of culturally appropriate governance structures in the Niger Delta context.

The findings therefore confirm that the exclusion of local communities from remediation policy-making processes contributes significantly to communal resistance, protests, and conflict. They also suggest that inclusive, participatory, and transparent decision-making incorporating local leaders, youths, women, and traditional institutions is essential for building trust, reducing resistance, and ensuring the sustainable implementation of environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta.

Table 4.5: Mean Score Analysis of the Relationship between Low-Quality Remediation Projects and Youth Restiveness

Item	**Statement (Summary)**	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**Decision**
1	Communities are excluded from remediation decisions	305	215	55	25	3.33	Accepted
2	Local leaders are rarely consulted	290	220	60	30	3.28	Accepted
3	Community exclusion increases resistance, especially among youths	315	205	55	25	3.35	Accepted
4	Inclusive processes ensure quality and successful remediation	330	195	45	30	3.38	Accepted
5	Youths are excluded from remediation dialogue	310	210	55	25	3.34	Accepted

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6	Women are excluded from remediation meetings	285	225	60	30	3.28	Accepted
7	Exclusion and poor-quality projects breed suspicion among youths	320	200	55	25	3.36	Accepted
8	Inclusive and high-quality remediation builds youth trust	325	200	50	25	3.38	Accepted
9	Weak involvement of traditional authorities reduces project quality	300	215	60	25	3.32	Accepted
10	Exclusion and poor-quality remediation lead to youth-led protests	335	195	45	25	3.40	Accepted
	Grand/ average					**3.34**	**Accepted**

Table 4.5 above presents respondents' perceptions of the relationship between low-quality environmental remediation projects, community exclusion, and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta, in line with the stated research objective. The results indicate a strong agreement that both the exclusion of local stakeholders and the perceived poor quality of remediation efforts contribute significantly to youth dissatisfaction, mistrust, and protest actions.

All the ten items recorded mean scores above the acceptance threshold, with values ranging from 3.28 to 3.40 and a grand mean of 3.34. This suggests a general consensus that communities - particularly youths - are often excluded from remediation decision-making processes. Statements such as "Communities are excluded from remediation decisions" (Mean = 3.33) and "Local leaders are rarely consulted*"* (Mean = 3.28) reflect perceptions of limited grassroots involvement, which undermines local ownership of remediation projects.

The findings further show that exclusion is closely linked to resistance and restiveness among youths. High agreement with items such as "Community exclusion increases resistance, especially among youths" (Mean = 3.35) and "Exclusion and poor-quality remediation lead to youth-led protests" (Mean = 3.40) underscores the role of marginalization and substandard project outcomes in fueling youth agitation. Respondents also agreed that poor-quality remediation projects breed suspicion among youths (Mean = 3.36), reinforcing distrust toward implementing agencies.

Conversely, respondents strongly affirmed the positive effects of inclusion and quality assurance. Items such as "Inclusive processes ensure quality and successful remediation" and "Inclusive and high-quality remediation builds youth trust" (Means = 3.38) recorded some of the highest scores, highlighting the importance of participatory approaches in enhancing project standards and reducing conflict. The perceived weak involvement of traditional authorities (Mean = 3.32) was also associated with reduced project quality, suggesting that sidelining established local institutions negatively affects project oversight and acceptance.

The acceptance of all items therefore demonstrates a clear relationship between low-quality remediation projects, exclusionary decision-making, and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta. The findings imply that meaningful inclusion of youths, women, local leaders, and traditional authorities-combined with a strong focus on quality implementation is essential for building trust, minimizing youth-led protests, and ensuring the sustainable success of environmental remediation projects in the region.

Table 4.6: Mean Score Analysis of the Effects of Gender Bias in Environmental Remediation Initiatives on Gender-Related Conflicts

Item	**Statement (Summary)**	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**Decision**
1	Environmental remediation projects are of poor quality	295	220	60	25	3.31	Accepted

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2	Poor-quality projects increase agitation among women and youths	310	210	55	25	3.34	Accepted
3	Remediation projects lack durability and long-term benefits	300	215	60	25	3.32	Accepted
4	Women and youths feel cheated by remediation outcomes	305	210	60	25	3.33	Accepted
5	Poor-quality remediation worsens environmental degradation affecting women's livelihoods	320	205	50	25	3.37	Accepted
6	Gender-related restiveness is linked to unmet remediation promises	290	220	65	25	3.29	Accepted
7	Women demand transparency and accountability in remediation projects	330	195	45	30	3.38	Accepted
8	High-quality and gender-sensitive projects reduce tension	325	200	45	30	3.37	Accepted
9	Improved project standards encourage women's engagement	335	195	40	30	3.39	Accepted
10	Monitoring and gender oversight of remediation projects are inadequate	340	190	45	25	3.41	Accepted
	Grand/ average					**3.35**	**Accepted**

Table 4.6 above presents respondents' perceptions of the effects of gender bias and project quality on environmental remediation initiatives and gender-related conflicts in the Niger Delta, in line with the stated research objective. The findings reveal a strong consensus that poor-quality remediation projects, combined with inadequate gender sensitivity, significantly contribute to dissatisfaction, agitation, and conflict among women and youths.

All the ten items recorded mean scores above the acceptance benchmark, ranging from 3.29 to 3.41, with a grand mean of 3.35. This indicates general agreement that environmental remediation projects are often perceived as substandard and lacking long-term benefits. High agreement with statements such as "Environmental remediation projects are of poor quality" (Mean = 3.31) and "Remediation projects lack durability and long-term benefits" (Mean = 3.32) suggests widespread concern about the effectiveness and sustainability of current remediation efforts.

The results further demonstrate that poor project quality has gender-specific implications. Respondents strongly agreed that substandard remediation increases agitation among women and youths (Mean = 3.34) and that women and youths feel cheated by remediation outcomes (Mean = 3.33). Notably, the statement "Poor quality remediation worsens environmental degradation affecting women's livelihoods" recorded a high mean score (3.37), highlighting how inadequate remediation directly undermines women's economic activities such as farming, fishing, and related livelihood practices in the Niger Delta.

Additionally, respondents associated gender-related restiveness with unmet remediation promises (Mean = 3.29), reflecting frustrations arising from unfulfilled expectations. Strong agreement was also recorded on the demand for transparency and accountability (Mean = 3.38), as well as concerns over inadequate monitoring and gender oversight of remediation projects (Mean = 3.41), which was the highest-scoring item. These findings suggest that weak accountability mechanisms exacerbate perceptions of bias and exclusion.

Conversely, respondents emphasized the benefits of high-quality and gender-sensitive remediation initiatives. Items such as "High quality and gender sensitive projects reduce tension" (Mean = 3.37) and "Improved project

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standards encourage women's engagement" (Mean = 3.39) underscore the role of inclusive and well-implemented projects in mitigating conflict and fostering cooperation.

Summarily, the acceptance of all the items confirms that gender bias, poor project quality, and inadequate oversight in environmental remediation initiatives significantly contribute to gender-related conflicts in the Niger Delta. The findings imply that integrating gender sensitivity, strengthening monitoring and accountability, and improving overall project quality are critical for reducing agitation among women and youths and ensuring the sustainable success of environmental remediation projects in the region.

Table 4.7: Results of Focal group discussion on Environmental Remediation and communal conflict

Items/ Questions	**Type of respondent**	**Feedbacks/responses from respondents**
RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1: Examine the effects of neglecting historical grievances on community trust and perceptions of environmental remediation projects.		
Do you think the historical grievances influence HYPREP Projects?	R1	Yes. The issue of medical services is been an effective hence and affect positive attitude.
	R2	Communities were not carried (imperialism) there was exclusion in the Niger Delta.
	R3	There are so many grievances because the government is not sincere. Before our people lost their livelihood because they were displaced from the land the major source of their livelihood. The aforementioned has been restored through mangrove restoration.
	R4	The Ogoni perceive the activities of the IOCs as detrimental to their environment which affected their economic and environment which caused the death of Ken Saro Wiwa and others.
	R5	The issue of oil production with federal government and IOCs has been mistrust because they
Is there any trust in the remediation project?	R1	Remediation is technical and they don't understand it properly. But the livelihood programme has given them hope. Now they understand the remediation because community members are now involved in the process.
	R2	The need of all and sundry will be captured in the Ogoni Bill of rights (OBR).
Has previous grievances affect perception?	R1	There was but hyprep improvement resolved it.
Has hyprep address the issue of historical grievances	R1	There are health facilities, livelihood programmes, the youth and women. Inclusion is the strategy
What's the quality of project that HYPREP is doing?	R1	You must be a technical expert to know the quality of environment remediation to look at what has been done already
Has poor quality of job caused youths restiveness?	R1	The community has the right to complain if the quality they get are not good but HYPREP has quality control unit that affects the changes.

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Has the community attitude changed?	R1	Hyprep engage community workers and skills have been given. Their attitude has changed
How about reparation?	R1	Public apology is not necessary. The solution is what we are doing to engage them
Gender sensitivity, are women represented	R1	Hyprep is gender sensitive regarding 40/60 requirement. This is 40 percent women and 60% of men. If the families encourage their daughters to have the capacity to be included in the project. The woman has to work to work towards their dreams and career because acceptance depends on your capacity
	R2	If it is a training, the women will get 40% but if it's a technical matter, you must be qualified
OBJECTIVE 2: Assess the impact of execution delays and efforts on community dissatisfaction and conflict escalation.		
Execution of project delay	R1	Remediation is technical, it must undergo procurement process that is protracted. When that is done, we inform the community to nominate persons. This takes another time. Thus, we commence training. It takes time to finish the process.
Has any grievances comes up for project delay?	R1	Sometimes, contractors don't pay early so they protest.
Has the local communities involved in the process?	Z and C	Where the leadership of every community are involved, the community has a committee to interfere with Hyprep.
Unclear Question	R3	Most of the elites doesn't believe in the process. They also are greedy. Transfer of aggression because of long-suffering. The grievance we have now are manipulated by the elites. The state even wanted to effect change but there were pockets of elites who thwarts the process The project has been taken the community. We have done 50. Now power project is on. The project is paying directly to the landlord. Despite the fact that the elites are offended. The periwinkle she's getting now is because of the shoreline cleanup (A community woman said). An average man thinks if a place is polluted nothing grows. But there's latent toxins beneath the soil. The rampant of delay- start date and effective day. The ability to access site in K. Dere from K. Dere.
How was the exclusion by IOCs addressed HYPREP?	R1	This program enhances community engagement strategy, town hall meetings. Shoreline is restricted to Gokana for now. Next year is TAI
What are the consequences of exclusion?	R1	They can disrupt the process. For instance, we engage the youths that were in artisanal refining to prevent conflicts

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Are women represented?	R1	This 40/60 principle and the current ratio is 45/55 by the project coordinator (PC) in Kporgor, Bomu, Bodo, GOI, etc. A lot of women are working in HYPREP sites now. We have female contractors. We have the Ogoni women group. There is SA women affairs. There is no gender bias.
Was there protest?	R1	A community set hyprep vehicle ablaze but recently hyprep has over 20 projects in that community
Has the community attitude changed?	R1	Hyprep engage community workers and skills has been given. Their attitude has changed.
OBJECTIVE 3: How does the exclusion of local communities from policy-making processes contributes to communal resistance?		
Can you describe any instance where there were protest because of exclusion?	R1	Yes, I see it all the time from the proliferations of groups in Ogoniland. The excuse is because they were not included. Almost every time, they spring up.
	R2	Before there was exclusion but the leadership of the hyprep boss include all and sundry. The people that are excluded are people with special needs because they are not given contracts and the wealthy are hijacked the process although this has nothing to do with the PC.
OBJECTIVE 4: To what extent does the relationship between low quality remediation projects influence youth restiveness?		
Are there quantity control measures?	R1	NOSDRA evaluates the quality of the job
What group feels most excluded?	R1	Yes, people with disability. Because of the cost of transportation, we can't convey all the peoples with special needs. Some came up that they were not called. Our expectations are that our information will tricle down. Others are Ogoni host communities' group. The youth groups spring up every time.
OBJECTIVE 5: How does the effects of gender bias in environmental remediation initiatives impacts gender related conflicts.		
What about the issue of gender bias?	R1	Prior before my involvement, there were women bias. But now we involve them. However, there are kinds of job women cannot do hence some of them bring people that can stand in for them. Women are represented in mangrove and livelihood programme. The reason for representation is age related.
What can reduce gender bias?	R1	We are more concerned with who takes the payment. That area to represent but we give performance to older people to appoint someone

Narrative Thematic Analysis of Focal Group Discussion

Research Question 1

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What are the effects of historical grievances on community trust and perceptions of environmental remediation projects?

Theme 1: Unresolved Historical Environmental Grievances

Sub-themes

(a) Long-standing oil pollution and environmental degradation

"Oil spills have destroyed our land and water for decades, yet no real effort was made to clean it up until recently."

(b) Loss of livelihoods (fishing, farming, mangroves)

"Before the pollution, fishing and farming sustained our families, but now the rivers and farmlands are no longer productive."

(c) Perceived abandonment and neglect by government and oil companies

"Once the oil was taken, the companies and government forgot about us and left us to suffer."

(d) Intergenerational transmission of grievances

"Our children grew up hearing how pollution ruined our lives, so they no longer trust any remediation promises."

Theme 2: Institutional Failure to Acknowledge Past Injustices

Sub-themes

(a) Absence of official recognition of past harm

"No authority has ever officially admitted the damage done to our community."

(b) Lack of compensation or reparations

"People lost everything, but no compensation was paid to affected families."

(c) Tokenistic engagement by remediation agencies

"They only come for meetings to tick boxes, not to genuinely listen to us."

(d) Silence or denial of responsibility by authorities

"Whenever we raise past damages, government officials shift the blame or remain silent."

Theme 3: Erosion of Community Trust

Sub-themes

(a) Deep-seated mistrust toward remediation actors

"We don't trust the agencies because they have failed us too many times."

(b) Skepticism about project intentions

"Many believe the projects are not meant to help us but to protect oil company interests."

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(c) Perception of remediation as political or cosmetic

"These clean-ups are just for political display, not real environmental restoration."

(d) Distrust fueled by past unfulfilled promises

"We were promised development before, but nothing changed, so why believe now?"

Theme 4: Role of Apologies and Reparative Justice

Sub-themes

(a) Demand for public apologies

"A public apology would show that the authorities accept responsibility for our suffering."

(b) Importance of restitution and compensation

"Without compensation, remediation cannot be meaningful to the people."

(c) Symbolic versus material reparations

"Words alone are not enough; we need both apology and tangible support."

(d) Healing and reconciliation through acknowledgment

"Acknowledging our pain is the first step toward peace and cooperation."

Theme 5: Strategies for Rebuilding Trust

Sub-themes

(a) Dialogue on historical injustices

"Open discussions about past wrongs would help rebuild trust."

(b) Truth-telling and inclusive consultations

"When people are told the truth and included, they are more willing to cooperate."

(c) Community-led reconciliation processes

"Trust will improve when communities lead the reconciliation process."

(d) Long-term commitment to justice and accountability

"Only sustained commitment, not short projects, can restore our confidence."

Research Question 2

How does execution delays impact community dissatisfaction and conflict escalation?

Theme 1: Prevalence and Causes of Project Delays

Sub-themes

(a) Bureaucratic bottlenecks

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"Approval processes take too long and slow down remediation work."

(b) Funding inconsistencies

"Projects often stop because funds are released late or not at all."

(c) Contractor inefficiency

"Some contractors lack the capacity to complete the work on time."

(d) Political interference and corruption

"Politics and corruption interfere with project timelines."

Theme 2: Declining Community Confidence

Sub-themes

(a) Loss of faith in project implementers

"People no longer believe the agencies will complete the projects."

(b) Perception of deliberate abandonment

"Many think the delays are intentional to frustrate the community."

(c) Growing frustration and impatience

"The longer the delay, the angrier the people become."

(d) Reduced community cooperation

"Community members stop cooperating when projects stall."

Theme 3: Community Dissatisfaction and Social Tensions

Sub-themes

(a) Complaints and public grievances

"Residents constantly complain about abandoned remediation sites."

(b) Community protests and demonstrations

"Protests often arise when delays persist without explanation."

(c) Intra-community disputes

"Delays create tension among community factions."

(d) Heightened suspicion among stakeholders

"Everyone begins to suspect each other of sabotage or collusion."

Theme 4: Conflict Escalation from Delayed Projects

Sub-themes

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(a) Violent confrontations

"Some protests have turned violent due to prolonged frustration."

(b) Sabotage of project sites

"Angry youths sometimes vandalize stalled project sites."

(c) Hostility toward contractors

"Contractors are often threatened when work is delayed."

(d) Breakdown of peace and order

"Delays have led to a breakdown of peace in some communities."

Theme 5: Vulnerable Groups and Delay-Induced Hardship

Sub-themes

(a) Youth unemployment and anger

"Idle youths become angry when projects meant to provide jobs are delayed."

(b) Women's loss of livelihood support

"Delays worsen women's economic struggles."

(c) Increased household vulnerability

"Families suffer more as remediation drags on."

(d) Marginalization during project stagnation

"The most vulnerable are forgotten when projects stop."

Theme 6: Communication and Conflict Prevention

Sub-themes

(a) Poor information sharing on delays

"Communities are rarely informed about why projects are delayed."

(b) Importance of transparency

"Clear communication would reduce suspicion and anger."

(c) Early warning and dialogue mechanisms

"Early dialogue can prevent conflicts from escalating."

(d) Participatory project timelines

"Involving communities in setting timelines builds understanding."

Research Question 3

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How does the exclusion of local communities and authorities from policy-making processes contribute to communal resistance?

Theme 1: Limited Community Participation in Decision-Making

Sub-themes

(a) Top-down project planning

"The remediation project was designed in Abuja without considering our local realities or needs."

(b) Exclusion of traditional rulers

"Our traditional rulers were not consulted, even though they are the custodians of the land."

(c) Minimal grassroots consultation

"Only a few people were invited to meetings, and the wider community was ignored."

(d) Tokenistic participation

"Community meetings were held just to fulfill formal requirements, not to influence decisions."

Theme 2: Marginalization of Key Community Groups

Sub-themes

(a) Exclusion of youths

"The youths were sidelined, even though they are the most affected and most active group."

(b) Limited involvement of women

"Women were rarely invited to discussions, despite their dependence on the land and water."

(c) Neglect of local leaders and CSOs

"Local NGOs and community leaders with experience were not involved in the process."

(d) Power imbalance between agencies and communities

"Government agencies dominate decisions, leaving communities powerless."

Theme 3: Effects of Exclusion on Community Cooperation

Sub-themes

(a) Resistance to remediation projects

"Because we were not consulted, many people resisted the project."

(b) Withdrawal of community support

"Community members refused to support activities they did not help plan."

(c) Hostility toward external actors

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"Outsiders working on the project were seen as intruders."

(d) Weak project ownership

"People don't feel the project belongs to them, so they don't protect it."

Theme 4: Communal Resistance and Protest Actions

Sub-themes

(a) Organized protests

"Protests were organized to express dissatisfaction with the exclusion."

(b) Project disruptions

"Work was disrupted because community members felt ignored."

(c) Refusal to grant access to sites

"Some communities denied contractors access to remediation sites."

(d) Mobilization against state and corporate actors

"The community united against government agencies and oil companies."

Theme 5: Pathways to Inclusive Policy Engagement

Sub-themes

(a) Participatory governance frameworks

"Inclusive governance would reduce conflict and improve cooperation."

(b) Community co-design of policies

"Projects should be designed with direct community input."

(c) Institutionalizing local consultation

"Consultation should be mandatory, not optional."

(d) Empowerment of traditional institutions

"Traditional institutions should be empowered to mediate project decisions."

Research question 4: To what extent does the relationship between low-quality remediation projects influence youth restiveness?

Theme 1: Perceived Poor Quality of Remediation Projects

Sub-themes

(a) Incomplete or abandoned projects

"Many remediation projects were started but never completed."

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(b) Use of substandard materials

"Inferior materials were used, making the projects ineffective."

(c) Short-lived remediation outcomes

"Polluted sites return to their previous state after a short time."

(d) Failure to meet environmental standards

"The projects do not meet basic environmental restoration standards."

Theme 2: Youth Perceptions and Reactions

Sub-themes

(a) Disappointment and frustration

"Youths feel disappointed when remediation projects fail."

(b) Loss of hope in remediation efforts

"Many youths have lost hope that remediation will ever succeed."

(c) Growing sense of injustice

"The failure of projects reinforces feelings of injustice among youths."

(d) Distrust of implementing agencies

"Youths distrust agencies they believe are dishonest or incompetent."

Theme 3: Youth Restiveness and Mobilization

Sub-themes

(a) Protests and demonstrations

"Youth-led protests increased following failed remediation efforts."

(b) Threats to project workers

"Some workers were threatened due to youth anger."

(c) Sabotage and vandalism

"Projects were vandalized as a form of protest."

(d) Formation of militant youth groups

"Some youths formed groups to resist perceived exploitation."

Theme 4: Credibility Crisis of Remediation Agencies

Sub-themes

(a) Perception of corruption

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"Many believe funds meant for remediation are diverted."

(b) Lack of technical competence

"Agencies lack the expertise to carry out proper remediation."

(c) Absence of accountability

"No one is held accountable when projects fail."

(d) Erosion of institutional legitimacy

"The failure of projects has damaged the credibility of agencies."

Theme 5: Quality Control and Conflict Mitigation

Sub-themes

(a) Independent monitoring mechanisms

"Independent monitors would improve project quality."

(b) Youth participation in project oversight

"Involving youths in monitoring would reduce suspicion."

(c) Technical transparency

"Transparent processes would rebuild trust among youths."

(d) Enforcing environmental standards

"Strict enforcement of standards would prevent conflict."

Research Question 5: How do the effects of gender bias in environmental remediation initiatives impact gender-related conflicts?

Theme 1: Gender Representation in Remediation Processes

Sub-themes

(a) Underrepresentation of women

"Women are rarely represented in remediation committees."

(b) Male-dominated decision-making

"Decisions are made mostly by men."

(c) Exclusion from leadership roles

"Women are excluded from leadership positions."

(d) Cultural and institutional barriers

"Cultural norms limit women's participation."

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Theme 2: Barriers to Women's Participation

Sub-themes

(a) Patriarchal norms

"Patriarchy restricts women's involvement in public decision-making."

(b) Limited access to information

"Women often receive information late or not at all."

(c) Economic constraints

"Economic hardship limits women's ability to participate."

(d) Lack of institutional support

"Institutions do not provide support for women's inclusion."

Theme 3: Gender Bias and Project Outcomes

Sub-themes

(a) Overlooking women's environmental needs

"Women's specific environmental concerns are ignored."

(b) Inequitable distribution of project benefits

"Project benefits favor men more than women."

(c) Reduced project effectiveness

"Excluding women reduces project effectiveness."

(d) Sustainability challenges

"Projects that ignore women struggle to remain sustainable."

Theme 4: Gender-Related Conflicts and Tensions

Sub-themes

(a) Household-level disputes

"Project benefits have caused conflict within households."

(b) Community gender tensions

"Gender bias has increased tensions between men and women."

(c) Marginalization-induced grievances

"Women express grievances due to continued marginalization."

(d) Women-led resistance

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"Some women organized protests to demand inclusion."

Theme 5: Women's Contributions to Peace and Remediation

Sub-themes

(a) Role of women's groups

"Women's groups play key roles in promoting peace."

(b) Female leadership in conflict resolution

"Female leaders help mediate conflicts."

(c) Grassroots advocacy

"Women advocate for environmental justice at the grassroots level."

(d) Community mediation efforts

"Women often mediate disputes within communities."

Theme 6: Promoting Gender Equity in Remediation

Sub-themes

(a) Gender-sensitive policy frameworks

"Policies must explicitly address gender inequality."

(b) Inclusive consultation processes

"Inclusive consultations improve project outcomes."

(c) Capacity building for women

"Training empowers women to participate effectively."

(d) Mainstreaming gender in project design

"Gender considerations should be integrated from the planning stage."

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Socio-demographic characteristics of the Respondents

The gender distribution shows a predominance of male respondents (60%), reflecting the male-dominated leadership and decision-making structures commonly observed in Niger Delta communities and environmental governance institutions. However, the substantial female representation (37.5%) is significant, given the increasing role of women groups in environmental advocacy and conflict mediation.

Similar gender patterns were reported by Idemudia (2014) and Ikelegbe (2013), who observed that although men dominate formal governance structures, women are increasingly visible in grassroots environmental struggles. Age distribution indicates that respondents are largely within the economically active population, with 75% falling between 18 and 45 years. This demographic is particularly relevant to communal conflicts, as youths and

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young adults are often the most affected by environmental degradation and unemployment, making them central actors in protests and resistance movements (Agbiboa, 2014; Watts, 2008).

The educational attainment shows that over 61% of respondents possess at least secondary education, suggesting adequate literacy levels to understand remediation policies and articulate grievances. This supports findings by Obi (2010), who argued that increased educational exposure in the Niger Delta has enhanced community awareness and resistance to exclusionary environmental governance.

The occupational distribution reveals a strong presence of farmers and traders (50.9%), underscoring the dependence of local livelihoods on environmental resources. Environmental degradation and failed remediation therefore directly threaten income sources, increasing the likelihood of conflict.

The representation of civil servants (28.3%) and institutional actors further strengthens the credibility of the responses. The stakeholder composition reflects balanced inclusion of key actors in remediation governance. The high proportion of women groups (19.2%) and youth groups (18.3%) is particularly significant, as these groups are often at the forefront of communal agitation and advocacy. Studies by UNEP (2011) and Ikelegbe (2013) emphasize that excluding these groups from remediation planning exacerbates mistrust and conflict.

The demographic characteristics of respondents provide a strong foundation for analyzing communal conflicts associated with environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta. The dominance of youths, women, and livelihood-dependent groups underscores the social sensitivity of remediation initiatives and explains why exclusion, poor quality, and delays often translate into communal unrest.

Effects of historical grievances on community trust and perceptions of environmental remediation projects.

The results demonstrate a consistently high level of agreement across all items, confirming that unresolved historical grievances significantly undermine trust and shape negative perceptions of environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta. Respondents strongly agreed that ignoring past injustices, including environmental degradation, loss of livelihoods, and unmet promises by both government and oil companies, fuels resistance and skepticism toward remediation initiatives.

This finding aligns with existing studies that emphasize the importance of historical context in environmental governance. Watts (2008) and Ikelegbe (2013) argue that environmental conflicts in the Niger Delta are deeply rooted in decades of neglect, marginalization, and unaddressed ecological damage. Similarly, UNEP (2011) reports on Ogoniland highlight that community distrust persists largely because remediation efforts failed to acknowledge or compensate for past harms adequately.

The high mean scores for items related to acknowledgment, apology, and compensation suggest that communities perceive symbolic and material redress as critical trust-building mechanisms. This supports the restorative justice perspective advanced by Lederach (1997), which emphasizes dialogue, acknowledgment of harm, and reparations as foundations for sustainable peace in post-conflict societies. Comparable findings were reported by Idemudia (2014), who observed that corporate-led remediation projects lacking community engagement and historical sensitivity often face resistance and sabotage.

From the stakeholder perspectives, while acknowledging technical progress, agency representatives may perceive historical grievances as outside their formal mandate. However, the results suggest that communities expect HYPREP to play a mediating role by integrating historical acknowledgment into remediation processes. Government respondents are likely to recognize that policy inconsistencies and delayed responses to historical injustices contribute to mistrust. The findings reinforce calls for stronger political commitment and transparent redress mechanisms. Traditional authorities often act as custodians of communal memory.

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Their likely agreement with the findings reflects concerns that ignoring history undermines their legitimacy and weakens community cohesion. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and CDCs are typically vocal advocates for historical justice. Their strong support for dialogue and compensation aligns with their grassroots experiences of exclusion from decision-making.

Women respondents may particularly associate historical neglect with long-term health, water, and livelihood challenges, reinforcing their support for acknowledgment and inclusive dialogue. Youths, often at the forefront of protests, are likely to view unresolved grievances as evidence of systemic injustice, explaining their strong agreement that neglect fuels resistance and conflict. Overall, the convergence of stakeholder opinions underscores the centrality of historical grievances in shaping perceptions of remediation projects.

Assessing the impact of execution delays and efforts on community dissatisfaction and conflict escalation.

The results reveal a strong consensus that delays in the execution of environmental remediation projects intensify community dissatisfaction and serve as catalysts for communal conflict in the Niger Delta. High mean scores across all items suggest that respondents perceive project delays not merely as administrative setbacks, but as indicators of deeper governance failures such as corruption, incompetence, and lack of commitment by implementing agencies.

Execution delays were found to exacerbate dissatisfaction and conflict escalation, particularly among youths. Similar findings were reported by Obi and Rustad (2019), who linked delayed development interventions to increased protests and militancy in oil-producing communities.

The finding that delays frustrate communities and escalate conflict aligns with conflict theory and grievance-based explanations of collective action, which argue that unmet expectations heighten frustration and increase the likelihood of protest and violence (Gurr, 1970). In the Niger Delta context, where communities have experienced decades of environmental neglect, delays reinforce historical mistrust and heighten sensitivities to perceived injustice (Watts, 2008).

The strong agreement that youths are the most affected by project delays supports previous studies showing that youth unemployment and exclusion from development benefits contribute significantly to restiveness and militancy in the region (Ikelegbe, 2013; Agbiboa, 2014). Delays disrupt anticipated job opportunities and economic relief associated with remediation projects, thereby exacerbating youth-led protests and intergenerational tensions.

The acceptance of items related to communication underscores the importance of transparency. Similar studies by Idemudia (2014) and UNEP (2011) report that poor communication during project delays often leads communities to assume mismanagement or diversion of funds. Conversely, timely updates and clear timelines are shown to moderate expectations and reduce hostility toward project implementers.

Agency officials may attribute delays to procurement bottlenecks and regulatory constraints. However, community perceptions reflected in the findings suggest that such explanations are often insufficient without transparent communication. Government respondents are likely to recognize that delayed budget releases and policy inconsistencies contribute to project slowdowns, validating concerns about institutional inefficiency. Traditional leaders may view delays as threats to their mediating roles, as prolonged projects weaken their credibility and fuel youth challenges to traditional authority.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) and community development committees (CDCs) are likely to interpret delays as exclusionary practices that undermine participatory development and accountability. Women respondents may associate delays with prolonged exposure to polluted water, farmlands, and ill-health risks, increasing dissatisfaction and anxiety at the household level.

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Youths on the other hand, are particularly sensitive to delays due to unmet employment expectations, making them more prone to protest and confrontation. The convergence of these stakeholder views highlights execution delays as a critical trigger of communal conflict.

Evaluation of how the exclusion of local communities from policy-making processes contributes to communal resistance.

The results reveal overwhelming agreement that the exclusion of local communities from policy-making processes is a major driver of communal resistance to environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta. High mean scores across all items demonstrate that respondents perceive exclusion not only as a governance failure but also as a direct trigger of mistrust, hostility, and protest.

This finding aligns with the participatory development theory, which posits that projects imposed without stakeholder involvement are more likely to face resistance and failure (Chambers, 1997). In the Niger Delta context, exclusion reinforces long-standing grievances linked to marginalization, environmental degradation, and broken promises by the state and multinational oil companies (Watts, 2008; Ikelegbe, 2013).

The strong agreement that exclusion of youths and women fuels resistance supports earlier studies indicating that marginalized sub-groups often become the most vocal opponents of externally driven development interventions (Agbiboa, 2014; Idemudia, 2014).

Youth exclusion, in particular, exacerbates perceptions of injustice and increases the likelihood of protests and sabotage, while women's exclusion undermines household-level support for remediation initiatives. Similarly, the recognition of the role of traditional authorities reflects indigenous governance structures in the Niger Delta, where chiefs and elders serve as intermediaries between communities and external actors. Studies by Obi (2010) and UNEP (2011) show that bypassing traditional institutions weakens project legitimacy and intensifies conflict.

From the analysis of the views of the stakeholders, remediation agency officials may view policy design as a technical process; however, the findings suggest that communities expect meaningful participation beyond information sharing. Government respondents are likely to acknowledge that top-down policy approaches and bureaucratic rigidity contribute to exclusion and resistance.

Traditional leaders may strongly agree with the findings, as exclusion undermines their authority and weakens social cohesion. The CBOs and CDCs are likely to perceive exclusion as deliberate marginalization, reinforcing demands for transparency and accountability and the women respondents may associate exclusion with continued exposure to environmental health risks and limited livelihood opportunities, while **y**ouths are particularly sensitive to exclusion due to unemployment and unmet expectations, making them more inclined toward resistance and protest.

The convergence of stakeholder perspectives underscores participation as a central determinant of project acceptance and peace.

The exclusion of communities from policy-making processes emerged as a major driver of resistance. This supports participatory governance literature, which emphasizes community inclusion as critical to project legitimacy and sustainability (Adekola & Mitchell, 2011).

Investigation of the relationship between low quality remediation projects and youth restiveness.

The findings demonstrate a strong and positive relationship between low-quality environmental remediation projects and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that exclusion of communities—particularly youths—from decision-making processes contributes to poor project quality, distrust, and subsequent resistance. These outcomes manifest in protests, vandalism, and confrontations with remediation agencies.

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This result aligns with frustration–aggression theory, which suggests that unmet expectations and perceived injustice heighten aggressive responses, especially among marginalized youth populations (Gurr, 1970). In the Niger Delta, remediation projects are often perceived as opportunities for environmental justice, employment, and recognition. When such projects are poorly executed or exclude youths, frustration intensifies and manifests as restiveness (Watts, 2008).

The strong agreement that inclusion ensures project success indicates that quality remediation is not viewed solely as a technical process but as a participatory one. Similar studies by Idemudia (2014) and Obi (2010) reveal that remediation projects lacking community input often fail to address local environmental realities, resulting in substandard outcomes that fuel dissatisfaction.

The findings further reveal that youth exclusion is particularly consequential because they constitute the most active and economically vulnerable group in host communities, and their exclusion from remediation dialogue reinforces perceptions of exploitation and neglect. Ikelegbe (2013) and Agbiboa (2014) report that youth-led resistance in the Niger Delta is often a response to failed development and environmental governance initiatives.

The acknowledged role of traditional authorities suggests that low-quality projects also result from bypassing indigenous governance systems. Traditional rulers serve as gatekeepers of local legitimacy, and their marginalization weakens oversight and accountability, thereby affecting project quality and acceptance (UNEP, 2011).

Remediation agencies may attribute perceived low quality to funding constraints or technical challenges. However, community responses indicate that exclusion and weak engagement undermine acceptance of project outcomes. Government respondents recognize that policy-driven, top-down remediation approaches often compromise quality and fuel youth dissatisfaction.

Traditional authorities may view poor-quality remediation as a consequence of sidelining local knowledge and leadership while CBOs and CDCs mostly interpret low-quality projects as evidence of weak accountability and exclusionary governance. Women usually associate poor-quality remediation with continued environmental health risks affecting households and children, indirectly reinforcing youth frustration while the youth respondents are mostly perceive low-quality remediation as a betrayal of expectations, making them more prone to protests and restiveness. The convergence of these perspectives confirms that youth restiveness is deeply connected to perceptions of remediation quality and inclusion.

Effects of gender bias on environmental remediation initiatives and gender related conflicts.

The findings reveal a strong consensus that gender bias in environmental remediation initiatives exacerbates gender-related conflicts in the Niger Delta. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that poor-quality and non-durable remediation projects disproportionately affect women, whose livelihoods are closely tied to land, water, and household environmental health. When remediation outcomes fail to restore these resources, frustration and gender-based tensions intensify.

This result aligns with feminist political ecology, which argues that environmental interventions that ignore gendered power relations often deepen inequalities and conflict (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996). In the Niger Delta, women are primary users of natural resources for subsistence farming, fishing, and water collection; therefore, poor-quality remediation directly undermines their socio-economic roles (UNEP, 2011).

The strong agreement that women demand transparency and improved standards suggests rising gender consciousness and resistance to exclusionary governance. Similar findings by Idemudia (2014) and Obi (2010) show that when remediation projects are poorly monitored and fail to deliver promised benefits, women's groups increasingly mobilize to challenge both traditional male leadership and external agencies, sometimes leading to intra-community conflict.

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Furthermore, inadequate monitoring was perceived as a major contributor to gender bias. Weak oversight allows contractors to deliver substandard outcomes that ignore women's needs, reinforcing perceptions of exploitation and marginalization. Studies by Ikelegbe (2013) and Watts (2008) similarly link governance failure in the Niger Delta to social fragmentation and gendered grievances. Finally, gender bias in remediation initiatives was found to fuel gender-related conflicts. This is consistent with findings by Ogbogu (2016) and UN Women (2020), which emphasize that excluding women from environmental governance undermines peacebuilding and project effectiveness.

From the perspectives of the stakeholders, remediation agencies emphasize technical completion of projects; however, the findings suggest limited attention to gender-specific quality outcomes. Government respondents acknowledge that gender mainstreaming remains weak in remediation policy frameworks. Traditional leaders perceived women's agitation as challenging customary authority, yet recognize that poor remediation outcomes fuel household-level conflict.

The CBOs and CDCs interpret poor quality and weak monitoring as evidence of exclusionary governance and advocate for gender inclusion. The women respondents strongly associate poor-quality remediation with livelihood loss, health risks, and gender injustice, explaining heightened agitation, while the youths support women's demands for transparency, while also linking gender bias to broader governance failures. The convergence of these perspectives confirms that gender bias in remediation quality is a critical conflict driver.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

i. The study established that neglect of historical grievances significantly undermines community trust in environmental remediation projects. Communities perceive acknowledgment of past harms, dialogue, and compensation as essential trust-building strategies. Ignoring historical injustices fuels resistance, skepticism, and communal conflict. All stakeholder groups demonstrate strong consensus on the relevance of historical experiences in shaping current perceptions.

ii. Execution delays significantly frustrate host communities and reduce confidence in remediation projects. Delays heighten youth–elder tensions and escalate communal conflicts. Poor communication during delays worsens distrust, while regular updates help manage expectations.

iii. Local communities are widely excluded from remediation policy-making processes. Exclusion of community members, especially youths and women, increases resistance and protest. Inclusive decision-making enhances trust, cooperation, and project success. Traditional authorities play a critical role in legitimizing remediation policies.

iv. Poor-quality remediation projects disproportionately affect women and exacerbate gender-related tensions.

v. Gender bias is reflected in weak monitoring, lack of durability, and unmet promises. Women increasingly demand transparency, accountability, and higher project standards. Gender-sensitive and high-quality remediation reduces communal and gender-based conflict. Inclusive processes enhance remediation quality, trust, and cooperation.

Conclusion

Environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta cannot achieve sustainable success without addressing historical grievances. The persistence of mistrust and communal conflict is closely linked to decades of unresolved environmental harm, exclusion, and broken promises. Remediation efforts that focus solely on technical clean-up while neglecting historical injustices risk reinforcing conflict rather than resolving it.

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Execution delays in environmental remediation projects play a significant role in driving community dissatisfaction and escalating communal conflicts in the Niger Delta. Delays not only undermine project credibility but also reactivate historical grievances and intensify intergroup tensions, particularly among youths.

The exclusion of local communities from policy-making processes significantly contributes to communal resistance and conflict in environmental remediation projects in the Niger Delta. Sustainable remediation outcomes require participatory governance structures that recognize local voices, institutions, and experiences

Low-quality environmental remediation projects significantly influence youth restiveness in the Niger Delta. When remediation efforts are exclusionary and poorly executed, they reinforce mistrust, heighten frustration, and provoke youth-led resistance. Sustainable remediation outcomes therefore depend on both technical excellence and inclusive governance.

Gender bias in environmental remediation initiatives significantly contributes to gender-related conflicts in the Niger Delta. Poor-quality and weakly monitored projects undermine women's livelihoods and social roles, intensifying dissatisfaction and intra-community tensions. Sustainable remediation therefore requires both technical excellence and gender-responsive governance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

i. In view of the finding that neglect of historical grievances significantly undermines community trust, the study recommends that environmental remediation agencies such as HYPREP, relevant government institutions, and oil companies should institutionalize grievance acknowledgment mechanisms as a core component of remediation projects. This should include public recognition of past environmental harms, community-level dialogue forums, and transparent compensation frameworks. Remediation initiatives should be preceded by community truth-telling and reconciliation engagements that validate local experiences and address long-standing injustices. Such trust-building measures will reduce resistance, enhance cooperation, and mitigate communal conflict associated with remediation efforts.

ii. Given that execution delays heighten frustration, youth–elder tensions, and conflict escalation, the study recommends that remediation projects adopt clear implementation timelines with legally binding milestones. Agencies should strengthen project management capacity to minimize delays and ensure continuity. Where delays are unavoidable, regular, transparent communication through community briefings and progress reports should be maintained to manage expectations. Establishing community-based monitoring committees can further promote accountability, reduce misinformation, and prevent conflict arising from uncertainty and perceived neglect.

iii. In response to the widespread exclusion of local communities from remediation policy processes, the study recommends a shift from top-down to participatory remediation governance models. Local stakeholders—particularly youths, women, and traditional authorities—should be formally represented in planning, decision-making, and evaluation structures. Traditional institutions should be engaged as legitimate intermediaries to enhance policy acceptance and compliance. Inclusive participation will strengthen local ownership, reduce protest and resistance, and improve the overall effectiveness and sustainability of remediation projects.

iv. Considering the link between poor quality remediation projects and youth restiveness, the study recommends that remediation agencies enforce strict quality assurance and monitoring standards. Independent technical audits and community-led quality assessments should be incorporated to ensure durability and environmental effectiveness. Additionally, youths should be actively engaged through skills training, local employment opportunities, and project oversight roles. Meaningful youth inclusion will not

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only improve project quality but also reduce restiveness by transforming youths from opponents into stakeholders in remediation outcomes.

v. In light of evidence that gender bias exacerbates project failure and gender-related conflicts, the study recommends the mainstreaming of gender-sensitive approaches in all stages of environmental remediation. Women should be deliberately included in consultation, monitoring, and decision-making processes. Gender impact assessments should be conducted prior to project implementation to identify and address women's specific environmental, health, and livelihood concerns. Ensuring transparency, accountability, and high project standards will enhance trust among women, improve remediation quality, and reduce gender-based tensions and communal conflict.

Contributions to Knowledge

The study provides systematic and empirical evidence on the link between environmental remediation projects and communal conflicts, an area that has received limited scholarly attention despite the longevity of remediation efforts in the Niger Delta. While existing studies largely focus on oil spill impacts, environmental degradation, or policy failures, this research goes further by evaluating how remediation processes themselves shape community perceptions, trust, and conflict outcomes.

By examining remediation as an active social and political process rather than a purely technical intervention, the study fills a critical gap in the literature. The research also advances knowledge by demonstrating how unresolved historical environmental grievances continue to influence contemporary community trust and attitudes toward remediation projects. It empirically establishes that neglecting past injustices does not merely affect perceptions but actively undermines cooperation, fuels suspicion, and sustains conflict cycles.

This contribution extends grievance-based conflict theories by situating environmental remediation as a key arena where historical injustices are either addressed or reproduced. In summary, this study bridges a critical knowledge gap by evaluating how environmental remediation operates in practice and how its failures or successes shape communal conflict dynamics in the Niger Delta, thereby offering original contributions to environmental governance, conflict studies, and development policy literature.

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