



# **A Review of Oil Exploitation and Exploration and Sustainable Community Development in Kula Kingdom of Rivers State**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This is a view of the activities of oil companies on sustainable community development in Kula Kingdom. It is a historical survey study. Finding of the study revealed that activities of oil companies affect the people of Kula Kingdom is several factors including youth restiveness and environmental degradation, soil erosion, greenhouse effect, loss of biodiversity, community leadership and sabotage activities. It was also revealed that oil companies' response to the problems of the activities leaves much to be desired by the people of the affected areas. It was recommended that prompt attention should be given in payment of compensation alongside the creation of a good working relationship between the oil companies and the people of Kula Kingdom and the establishment of adequate developmental projects to enable them contribute meaningfully to national development.

**Keywords:** community development, environmental degradation, youth restiveness

## **INTRODUCTION**

Community development means the transformation of the community into a fully participatory and modern society, whose citizens enjoy full economic and social well-being, which they generate. However, this transformation is not possible without the mobilization of the people which is the function of education. It will be difficult to fully mobilize predominantly illiterate society; this is where the crucial role of education is apparent.

The concept community development is composed of two basic words 'community' and 'development'. A convenient point for the proper understanding of the concept should, therefore, begin with the explication of the terms 'community' and 'development'. This we believe will put us in a better position to define community development.

Community development is also defined as an educational method in which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and integrate them into the life of the nation and enable them contribute fully to national progress (Onyeozu, 2007).

Although community development has its ancestry as a union of community organization and economic development, rural sociology, adult education and the extension movement, it is new as a discipline (Anyanwu, 1999).

Community development ensures that all aspects of community living are developed equitably so as to avoid imbalance or neglect in any area, to achieve increase in productivity and to raise the

production potentials by stimulating the human and physical processes of change, to reduce poverty and unemployment in the communities, to enhance self-reliance and increase the economic viability of families, to explore and use technical assistance from outside the community, to cooperate with and co-ordinate state and national development plans.

Therefore community development is a way of strengthening civil society by prioritising the actions of communities, and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental policy. It seeks the empowerment of local communities, taken to mean both geographical communities, communities of interest or identity and communities organising around specific themes or policy initiatives. It strengthens the capacity of people as active citizens through their community groups, organisations and networks; and the capacity of institutions and agencies (public, private and non-governmental) to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities. It plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. It has a set of core values/social principles covering human rights, social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity; and a specific skills and knowledge base.

### **Concept of Sustainable Community Development**

The concept of sustainability has been defined as “meeting the needs of present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

The failure of current sustainable development initiatives in the oil producing communities of Kula Kingdom to address negative injunction duties can be attributed to the oil companies’ drive for profitability and the absence of an enabling environment in the oil industry. Inadequate human and institutional capacity, corruption, institutional decay and overdependence on oil as the main source of government revenue have undermined the ability of the Rivers State government to ensure an enabling environment for sustainable development. Weak institutional and technical capacities mean regulatory agencies such as the Department of Petroleum Resources and the Rivers State Ministry of Environment are unable to effectively monitor and ensure compliance with regulatory statutes in the oil industry. Agwu (2013).

In addition he said, these regulatory agencies more or less depend on the oil companies to monitor and report on compliance. As a result, the regulated i.e. the oil companies are in effect the regulators. The conflict of interest that arises from this situation is manifested in the high incidence of oil spills and gas flaring in the Kula Kingdom. For example, Egbu asserts that neither the Federal Environmental Protection Agency’s Zonal Office in Port-Harcourt nor the Rivers state Ministry of Environment have a well-equipped laboratory. In the event of an oil contamination incident in Rivers state, the authorities often request that the responsible oil companies provide soil and water sample analysis.

Furthermore, corruption and institutional decay has meant that government officials are quick to turn a blind eye to gross violation of Nigerian laws for personal gains. For example, Halliburton acknowledged that it paid bribes worth \$2.4 billion to some Nigerian government officials for tax breaks related to its operation in Nigeria. Recently, Jim Bob Brown, a former staff member of Willbros Group Inc. (an oil servicing firm), confessed in a United States court that he paid bribes worth \$1.5 billion to officials of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and the Federal Inland Revenue Services to secure and retain contracts and to manipulate tax figures for the company.

On the other hand, government overdependence on oil revenue means that most of its policy is generally geared towards minimizing loss of oil revenue at the expense of environmental protection or the protection of citizens’ rights. Indeed, Ikporukpo (2007) has argued that given the importance of petroleum to the Nigerian economy, the laxity in enforcing existing legislation might actually be a deliberate policy to encourage foreign direct investment in the oil industry.

These sustainable development constraints create a condition in which the temptation for abnegating negative injunction duties by oil companies is high and the risk, cost and consequence for doing so are low. For example, in 1980, Chevron noted that compliance with the Gas Re-injection Decree would cost the company \$56 million, compared to a mere \$1 million per year that it would have to pay in fines for gas flaring. Gas flaring was in essence cheaper. The absence of an enabling environment invariably means that oil companies have huge latitude to pursue profitability without constraints.

Besides, consensus is emerging that oil companies can best contribute to sustainable development by optimizing the potential positive social, economic and environmental impact of oil production on host communities and minimizing the corresponding negative impacts. The issue here is that oil companies can best contribute to sustainable development of Kula Kingdom by not only creating new sources of livelihood via social investments, but also by ensuring that existing sources of livelihood are not destroyed or lost due to its operations. Prevention is as important as creation because, for development to be meaningful and sustainable, it must protect, preserve and conserve the lives and resources of rural inhabitants.

Agwu (2013), it is equally important to note that in Nigeria, the enabling environment for sustainable development is at best still largely ineffective, and the capacities of potential partners (government and local civil societies) to deliver on their responsibilities as at when due is undependable. Efforts presently geared toward institutional capacity building in existing community development partnership schemes will continue to yield limited dividends as long as the more fundamental issues are ignored. For example, the strengthening of local capacity to monitor and enforce local environmental regulation effectively will make little difference if developing countries' governments continue to lower environmental standards as an incentive to attract foreign direct investment. An example is the continual shifting of the date for ending gas flaring in Nigeria's oil industry, these frequent shifts have led most people in Kula Kingdom to believe that gas flaring will never end.

### **Effects of Oil Companies' Activities in Kula Kingdom**

The effects of oil companies' activities in Kula Kingdom refer to the following:

- **Youth Restiveness and Environmental Degradation:** Academic Journals (2007), one of the many-side effects of environmental injustice in Kula Kingdom is "Youth Restiveness" which metamorphosed into proliferation of arms and the emergence of militias that is arguably a threat to the macro-Nigerian environment. This work, which also relied on secondary sources of data, critically examines youth restiveness in Kula Kingdom and contends that the root cause is the legal environmental laws that provided the basis for the operational hazards of the oil conglomerates that have collaborated with the Nigerian state whose intervention agencies have largely failed to close the developmental gaps in the kingdom. According to Okafor – Ofiebor (1997), this work posits that in the face of sundry efforts by the Nigerian state, particularly the infinitesimal 13% derivation element of the current revenue sharing formula, the failed land use reform attempt, the partially successful short-run post-amnesty program, and the controversial petroleum industry bill, the central developmental concerns of Kula Kingdom have not been addressed. This work includes exigency of the modification of the obnoxious and eco-environmentally disadvantageous laws and a holistic developmental approach and action-based programs by the Nigerian government and oil conglomerates that will provide sustainable windows of opportunity and safety nets for the socio-economically disillusion youths.

Youth Restiveness is one the effects of the seemingly unending Kula Kingdom crisis, relates to matters of agitation by youths over issues of deprivation, neglect, marginalization, and feelings of dissatisfaction. According to Academic Journals (2007), the engagement by youths in agitation for the restoration of their rights and dignity or self-seeking and criminal activities, that can be either constructive (positive) or destructive (negative), is undoubtedly a hydra-headed socio-economic problem in Kula Kingdom. The root cause of the youth restiveness in the region is the broad spectrum of laws that have both colonial inspiration and feudal inclination and the accompanying actions of the Nigerian state on the country's oil industry and the age-long regime of environmental degradation due to the mindless operational threats arising from the oil exploration and production activities of the oil conglomerates. The legal/environmental laws that provided the constitutional foundation did not only create the environment which is up till today plaguing Kula Kingdom but also set the stage for the operational menace in which the kingdom has been engulfed. According to Omoweh (2006), a deeper insight into the nature of the collaboration by the three partners in the unholy alliance can largely be provided, taking cognizance of the fact that the Nigerian state (pre- and post-colonial) formulates the policies that create and determine the political and business environment that are clement for the capitalist development of the oil industry and the exploitation and underdevelopment of Kula Kingdom. In the face of the far from legal/environmentally benign laws and the devastating operational activities of the oil majors and minors, the cosmetic institutional interventionist efforts of

the Nigerian state supposedly meant to close the developmental gaps in the paradoxically rich-oil treasure-based, but poverty-ridden and underdeveloped, the kingdom has failed to achieve any tangible results. The patently stark environmental injustice that has been the lot of Kula Kingdom has provided a fertile ground for the deep-seated youth restiveness that had assumed frightening militant and anti-developmental dimensions.

- **Soil erosion:** Academic Journals (2007), soil is the earth's fragile skin that anchors all life on Earth. It is comprised of countless species that create a dynamic and complex ecosystem and is among the most precious resources to humans. Increased demand for agriculture commodities generates incentives to convert forests and grasslands to farm fields and pastures. In Kula Kingdom the transition to agriculture from natural vegetation often cannot hold onto the soil and many of these plants, such as coffee, cotton, palm oil, native fruits and palm wine, can actually increase soil erosion beyond the soil's ability to maintain itself. Half of the topsoil on the planet has been lost in the last 50 years. In addition to erosion, soil quality is affected by other aspects of agriculture. These impacts include compaction, loss of soil structure, nutrient degradation, and soil salinity. These are very real and at times severe issues.

Rodney (1986), the effects of soil erosion in Kula Kingdom goes beyond the loss of fertile land. It has led to increased pollution and sedimentation in streams and rivers, clogging these waterways and causing declines in fish and other species. And degraded lands are also often less able to hold onto water, which can worsen flooding. Sustainable land use can help to reduce the impacts of agriculture and livestock, preventing soil degradation and erosion and the loss of valuable land to desertification. Because of the activities been carried out by these oil companies, Kula Kingdom under-go deforestation because of no plant cover, erosion can occur and sweep the land into rivers. The agricultural plants that often replace the trees cannot hold onto the soil and many of these plants, such as coffee, cotton, palm oil, palm wine and native fruits, can actually worsen soil erosion. And as land loses its fertile soil, agricultural producers move on, clear more forest and continue the cycle of soil loss.

The health of soil is a primary concern to farmers and the global community whose livelihoods depend on well managed agriculture that starts with the dirt beneath our feet. While there are many challenges to maintaining healthy soil, there are also solutions and a dedicated group of people, who work to innovate and maintain the fragile skin from which biodiversity springs.

- **Greenhouse Effect:** Academic Journals (2007), the tendency of atmospheric temperature to rise because certain gases absorb infrared radiation from the earth. Gas flares have caused the people of Kula Kingdom potentially harmful effects on the health and livelihood of nearby communities, as they release poisonous chemicals including nitrogen dioxides, sulphur dioxide, volatile organic compounds like benzene, toluene, xylene and hydrogen sulfide, as well as carcinogens like benzopyrene and dioxins. Humans exposed to such substances can suffer from respiratory problems. These chemicals can aggravate asthma, caused breathing difficulties and pain, as well as chronic bronchitis. Benzene, known to be emitted from gas flares in undocumented quantities, is well recognized as a cause for leukemia and other blood-related diseases.

Greenhouse effect has also caused the people of Kula Kingdom water hyacinth invasion, which thrives in polluted environments. Water hyacinth has completely clog the waterways in which it grows, making it nearly impossible to navigate fishing boats. In recent years it has found its way into the Niger River, choking out both sunlight and oxygen to the marine organisms that live there.

When a species such as water hyacinth makes its way into the ecosystem, it competes with native plants for sunlight, diminishing energy resources within the marine environment. With the loss of energy some populations will not be able to survive, or their numbers may drop beyond a point of no return, creating a threatened environment. Added to the loss of energy, water hyacinth also takes up and depletes the water of oxygen which is essential to the livelihood of all marine organisms, these has brought; hunger, poverty, illiteracy, etc. to the people of Kula Kingdom because they live and feed in these marine organisms such as; fishing, mangrove foods and natural fruits. It has also caused gas flaring, gas flaring is generally discouraged as it releases toxic components into the atmosphere and contributes to climate change. Because of its reaction in the soil, the people of Kula Kingdom find it difficult in tasting or having good drinkable water in their land, because 99% of associated gas is used or re-injected into the ground.

- **Loss of Biodiversity:** Academic Journals (2007), Kula is situated in the South Western axis of Rivers State of Nigeria - under the Akuku-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. Its geographical coordinates are latitude 4.34139 and longitude 6.64611. It is a low-lying coastal area in the mangrove swamp region of the Niger Delta, with a few feet above the mean sea level, located very close to the Atlantic Ocean. The area is drained by a network of rivers such as San Batholomew (Aguda-Toru), Santa Babara (Owanga-Toru) etc. with their tributaries, creeks and tidal inlets.

Apart from the Kula main town, the Kula territory comprises many settlements in different locations that occupy a geographical space about two-third of the Akuku-Toru Local Government Area. Her expansive territories span to Opukiri in the North and extended to Owuanga-toru and Anwo-bio. Her physical environment is blessed with vast occurrence of natural resources including oil and gas accumulations. Kula is thus host to Shell and Chevron oil companies and their operations has affect the ecosystem and loss of biodiversity in the land by using their harmful instruments and machines that kills plants, animals, organism, etc.

Oil production and transportation, has disrupt the human population, and the animal and fish life of the kingdom. Oil waste dumping, production pollution, and spills wreak havoc on the surrounding wildlife and habitat. It threatens the extinction of several plants, and has already harmed many land, air, and sea animal and plant species.

The effects of oil on marine life are cause by either the physical nature of the oil (physical contamination and smothering) or by its chemical components (toxic effects and accumulation leading to tainting). Marine life may also be affected by clean-up operations or indirectly through physical damage to the habitats in which plants and animals live. The animals and plants most at risk are those that could come into contact with a contaminated sea surface: marine animals and reptiles; birds that feed by diving or form flocks on the sea; marine life on shorelines; and animals and plants in Mari culture facilities.

Runoffs from petroleum processing and petrochemical plants have dumped tons of toxic wastes into nearby waters. Gas and oil pipelines have stanchd many creeks and rivers, swamping prime pastures and cropland. Furthermore, entire bays and lagoons along coasts have been fouled by oil spills and runoff of toxic chemicals. The environmental damage that is a result of oil retraction and production has directly affected human life in the kingdom. The damage also includes pollution of water resources and contamination of the soil. Humans are effected by environmental devastation because it is damaging to vegetation, livestock, and to the health of the human body itself. Oil spills can interfere with the normal working of power stations and desalination plants that require a continuous supply of clean seawater and with the safe operation of coastal industries and ports.

The environmental damage has also been a result of conflict over oil-producing communities. Environmental harm associated with oil resources can either be attributed to a side effect of conflict or in some cases, it is associated with military aggression that is intended to damage the natural resources of the kingdom.

**Community Leadership:** Talbot (1932), the Kula tribe of the Ijaw people lives in Akuku Toru Local Government Area, southwestern Rivers State, Nigeria. Since the time of His Greatness, King Sara 1 (ADA- SARA), the originator of the dynasty that bears his name, many kings have ruled and reigned who defended the expansive territories which spanned to Opukiri in the North and extended to Owuanga-toru and Anwo-bio thereby maintaining the growth and development of the Kingdom status. But since the arrival of theses oil companies, their activities have affected leadership in Kula Kingdom. Leadership became a major challenge in Kula even as it has been enmeshed in various leadership crises that seem to be intractable. The dispute over the Amanyanabo (Kingship) stool started between the "warring brothers" (Chief Iwarisoibiba Aaron Sukubo-Igbe and Chief Kroma Amabibi Eleki) of the Sara Royal House on one hand and between the latter and the Oko Chieftaincy House on the other hand. This led to a cobweb of legal battle and corresponding disaffection in the area. The ugly state of affairs has worsened by the emergence of youth restiveness and militancy in the area, made Kula men and women shut down two Shell operated flow stations (Ekula-ma 1, Ekula-ma 2) and Chevron-Exaco-operated Robert-kiri flow station (December 2004).

## **SUMMARY**

Alagoa, Ebiegberi Joe (2005), previous attempts on sustainable development of oil producing communities in Kula Kingdom has been based on community development partnerships between oil producing companies, government agencies and local communities. This approach which have little or no impact on the way oil companies carry out their core business operations fails to prevent or compensate oil bearing communities for the negative social, economic and environmental externalities generated by oil exploration. The concern in business/society relationships today is not about making money the way one wants and then giving a portion of it back to the community; rather, it is about how a company earns its money, how that company is run and how it interacts with communities.

However, the partnership approach to sustainable development failed to appreciate this concern, and tacitly assumes that meeting affirmative duties via social investment is a sufficient compensation for failure to address negative injunction duties. Unfortunately, there is no amount of road or bridge construction, provision of electricity or awarding of scholarships that can compensate for the loss of daylight resulting from gas flaring, neither can cash payments compensate for future loss of livelihood.

At the heart of this argument is that negative injunction and affirmative duties are mutually reinforcing. While addressing negative injunction duties creates value, addressing affirmative duties adds as well as consolidates the value created. Consequently, the failure of current sustainable development initiatives in the oil producing communities of Kula Kingdom to encompass issues of negative injunction duties and influence how oil companies conduct their day-to-day operation means at best that sustainable development initiatives will have a marginal impact on host communities.

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