

**OIL SPILLS INJUSTICES IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION: REFLECTIONS ON OIL INDUSTRY FAILURE IN RELATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) REPORT**

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**ABSTRACT:** *For several decades, oil spills in the Niger Delta region caused widespread contamination of the environment with severe threat to immediate communities and sustainable development. Although there is a clear understanding of its true scale, magnitude and intensity of oil spill across the gamut of the Niger Delta region, however, this cannot be compared to the Gulf of Mexico oil spills in the USA in 2010 which drew the attention of the media globally. Evidently, the UNEP report conducted by an independent assessment after several field investigations and laboratory analysis of samples revealed an appalling environmental contamination on land, groundwater, surface water and sediments with severe impact on vegetation, air quality and public health. Thus, this paper highlights the oil spill injustices in the Niger Delta and reflects on the oil industry failure on environmental protection as contained in the UNEP reports on quality of the environment which contribute to the disease burden of the immediate community. This paper also reinforces the data in several published studies on oil spills, environmental inequality and its impact on the livelihood of the local population of the Niger Delta region.*

**KEYWORDS:** United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Oil Spills; Niger Delta Region; Local Communities; Environmental Pollution; Environmental Protection

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Oil spill occurs in various ways, such as leaks during processing, corrosion of oil pipes, poor maintenance of infrastructure and deliberate acts of vandalism or theft of crude oil from pipes. Oil spill sites are a common phenomenon in the Niger Delta region and multinational oil companies (MNOCs) records and investigations of spills in the region are also heavily disputed and politically sensitive. As it were, there are no consistent figures on the quantity of oil spills in the Niger Delta (Ordinioha and Brisibe 2013), but it is estimated that oil spill accounts for as many as 546 million gallons of oil into the Niger Delta environment over the last five decades, equivalent of about 11 million gallons annually (Amnesty International 2010). Oil spills continue to occur in alarming proportion in the Niger Delta communities, particularly in Ogoniland who are living in a chronic state of pollution (UNEP 2011).

Some scholars (Newell 2005; William 2008; Akpomovie 2011) have argued on the relationship between global economic linkages among the world's leading economies on oil and gas exploration lead by the MNOCs and the pollution of the environment of the world's poor and minority groups. Furthermore, the UNEP (2011); Obenade and Amangabara (2014) noted that indiscriminate dumping of hazardous materials, oil pollutant and spills are inimical to the immediate communities, and contaminate water and air quality. Environmental degradation has been made plausible by weak environmental regulations and poor enforcement mechanisms of the Nigerian state.

The UNEP reports based on two years scientific research revealed unprecedented widespread oil contamination of soil and water body with severe consequences on health, agriculture, ecology and aquatic life. The most critically affected is drinking water with adverse health

risk on communities. The spills contaminated the surface water, ground water, ambient air, and crops with hydrocarbons, including known carcinogens like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon and benzo (a) pyrene, naturally occurring radioactive materials, and trace metals that were further bioaccumulated in some food crops (Ordinioha and Brisibe 2013).

The UNEP team examined more than 200 locations, reviewed more than 5,000 medical records, surveyed 122 kilometres of pipeline rights of way and engaged over 23,000 people at local community meetings over a 14 month period. At the end of the exercise evidence revealed a devastation of oil pollution with large scale impact on farming and fisheries, destroyed livelihoods and air quality. The overall impact resulted in a loss of economic activities and created food scarcity as the local people are less able to catch fish or grow their own food.

Full assessment report of the UNEP report released to the public on August 4, 2011 on environmental injustices in Ogoniland and the Niger Delta revealed the following:

- Serious contamination of land and underground water tends to be localized; air pollution related to oil industry operations is pervasive and affects the quality of life of about one million people.
- Contamination of drinking water with concentrations of benzene, carcinogen and other multiplicity of pollutants at level over 900 times above World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.
- Contamination of soil over five meters deep in many area studies.
- Spill sites oil companies claimed to have cleaned up were still highly contaminated by pollutants.
- Oil companies failed to meet minimum Nigerian standards, let alone international oil industry standards.
- Water coated with hydrocarbon was more than 1,000 times the level allowed by Nigerian drinking water standards.
- Evidence of oil companies dumping contaminated soil in unlined pits.
- The impact of oil spills on mangrove vegetation is disastrous.

As with many oil companies operating in Nigeria, the UNEP report indicated that Shell does not achieve the Nigeria environmental standard, its own standard as well as the oil industry standards (Amnesty International 2014). Nevertheless, Shell promised to take immediate action, working with communities, government and other stakeholders, unfortunately no serious action has been taken by Shell and the government, and has continually blamed sabotage and theft as a major contribution to the problem of oil spills in the Niger Delta. For example, the Bodo oil spills in the Niger Delta region in 2008 which was caused by operational problems recorded about 4,000 barrels of oil spill a day for 10 weeks. The scale of the spill is likened to the Exxon Valdez 1989 disaster in Alaska, where 10 million gallons of oil destroyed the remote coastline.

Nevertheless, while the spill in the Western world, particularly the deep water horizon of the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster which claimed the lives of 11 rig workers made headlines around the world, however, very little information emerged from the large scale and damage inflicted on communities across the gamut of the Niger Delta due to several decades of oil spills until the UNEP report was published. Put succinctly that oil spills disaster had gone almost certainly unnoticed over several decades, which demonstrate the appalling state of environment management in Nigeria. Some studies (Barry 2010; Ordinioha and Brisibe 2013; Obenade and Amangabara 2014) describe the situation as strikingly appalling, but noted that nothing living moves in a black and brown water across the Niger Delta once regarded as teeming with fish, shrimps and crabs.

**Table 1: Major Source of Oil Spills in the Niger Delta (1998 – 2007)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Equipment Failure</b>	<b>Human Error</b>	<b>Sabotage/Theft</b>	<b>Total</b>
1998	28	12	65	105
1999	19	28	55	102
2000	34	39	40	113
2001	46	15	64	125
2002	39	20	67	126
2003	41	53	63	157
2004	38	32	96	166
2005	49	27	127	203
2006	37	39	187	263
2007	31	29	209	269
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>22.2%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: NNPC (2013)*

The Niger Delta has ecologically sensitive wetlands, which makes the impact of oil spills to be widely felt by the people in the region. The people depend on the environment for traditional livelihood (farming and fishing) and subsistence, thus the contamination of water, land and air quality continuously erode their capacity to support the lifestyle and economy survival (Barry 2010; Amnesty International 2011). When spills occur, whether on lands or waters caused by operational error, sabotage and theft, equipment failure and ageing pipeline, it contaminates water use for domestic purpose, fishing and farming activities with severe impact on the local people who are left with no alternative.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study analyses the failure of oil companies' industry activities in the Niger Delta as highlighted in the UNEP report which reflect the scale of oil spills on local communities in the Niger Delta. It involves the collection and review of relevant scholarly published articles and journals as well as the UNEP report on the impact of oil spills and the state of environmental pollution in the Niger Delta and livelihood of the people. This study also relied on statistical data obtained from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reports, Amnesty International and Shell on several years of oil spills in the Niger Delta. The secondary data obtained are analysed using descriptive method to reach a logical presentation. Obviously, this gives a clearer picture of the state of the Niger Delta environment and the impact of oil spills in the region.

## Oil Spills and The Niger Delta

Conceptual clarifications of oil spill entail the release of a liquid petroleum hydrocarbon into the environment owing to human induce activities such as oil exploration and prospecting (William 2002). Contributing to the conceptual argument, Oyebamiji and Mba (2014: 29) conceived oil spills to include releases of crude oil from tankers, offshore platforms, drilling rigs and wells, as well as spills of refined petroleum products (such as gasoline, diesel) and their by-products, and heavier fuels used by large ships such as bunker fuel, or the spill of any oily refuse or waste oil. The discharge of oil and other oil related pollutants into water body and land causes severe damage to fisheries and farmlands posing serious threat to economic activities, health and the immediate environment. It is a common sight to find flow stations, wellheads and major pipelines located in the heart of farmlands and water posing serious difficulties to the inhabitants whose sources of livelihood is farming. In some communities it is also a common sight to find pipelines laid on the surface of a densely populated rural setting crisscrossing streets and farmlands.

Some studies (Barry 2010; Ordinioha and Brisibe 2013) including the UNEP report identified the consequences of oil spills as damage to fragile mangrove forest, threatening of rare species, including primates, fish, turtles and birds, destruction of the livelihoods of the people, reducing the fertility of the soil. Specifically, the UNEP 2011 report amplified the effect of oil spills to include contamination of underground drinking water and pollution of air quality for the local people, contamination of mangrove vegetation and soil, and poor clean up of spill sites which failed to meet minimum Nigerian standards let alone international oil industry standard. In the same perspective, Opukri and Ibaba (2008) highlight the consequences of oil spills to include poverty, unemployment, productivity loss, rural–urban migration, population displacement and conflict. The collapse of the local economy and the dispossession of local people from farming and fishing due to the activities of oil spills have displaced many people from their occupation without viable alternatives.

Most Niger Delta communities, particularly the Ogoniland and its adjoining communities are surrounded by water, thus oil spills on water imply that fishing, which is a major means of livelihood is completely eroded by looming poverty. The structure and composition of the Niger Delta region is such that about 75% of the inhabitant depending mainly on their immediate environment for subsistence, thus making the region one of the world's most severely petroleum impacted ecosystems (Ajibade and Awomuti 2009; Ogonnaya 2011). Several decades of oil spills that is yet to be properly cleaned up has severely damaged the ecosystem and economic activities of the people. The Ogoniland case as revealed by the UNEP report is a vivid example, which represents the appalling environmental problem across the gamut of the Niger Delta region which the MNOCs failed to tackle for several decades.

Oil spills have aggravated environmental risk factors in the Niger Delta (Barry 2010; UNEP 2011), and the injustices continue to be widespread due mainly to the increase in dislocation and dispossession from farming and fishing activities by oil exploration and production activities. Ordinioha and Brisibe (2013) theorised that the oil spills could lead to a 60% reduction in household food security and were capable of reducing the ascorbic acid content of vegetables by as much as 36% and the crude protein content of cassava by 40%. Undoubtedly, the case of the Niger Delta is one of global environmental injustices, with harm fuelled from the 'Global North'; lead by the MNOCs and their allies that promotes human rights violations in the 'Global South' (Newell 2005). Yet, these injustices which have

attracted serious attention in the UNEP report are buried behind the frustrations of the people in part of the Ogoniland and its adjoining communities.

### **Causes of Oil Spills in the Niger Delta**

The major causes of oil spills in the Niger Delta are pipeline leakage due to old age, sabotage and theft, activities of illegal refinery, human error and equipment failure. History of oil spills in Nigeria is alarming, and represents one of the worst in the world (Barry 2010). Although there are no accurate data on the quantity of spills in Nigeria, however, according to the NNPC (2013); Ordinioha and Brisibe (2013) between 1998 and 2007 there were about 1,628 incidents of oil spills ranging from theft and sabotage, equipment failure, ageing pipeline and human errors. In the same vein, Amnesty International (2011) argued that through 2005 and 2010 there were about 1,110 oil spill incidences resulting into 298,000 barrels of oil from sabotage and operational problems (see table 2 below).

**Table 2: Oil spill, volume and cause (2005 – 2010)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of spills</b>	<b>Volume of spills/barrels</b>	<b>Major causes</b>
2005	180	10,000	95% sabotage
2006	170	20,000	Sabotage and operational (50% each)
2007	250	30,000	Operational 70% sabotage 30%
2008	170	100,000	Operational and sabotage 50% each
2009	150	110,000	Sabotage 90% and operational 10%
2010	190	28,000	Sabotage 80% and operational 20%

*Amnesty International (2011)*

In addition, UNDP (2006) maintained that when spills occur in whatever means it destroy farmland and fishing activities for the rural peasant economy, which are the main sources of employment and livelihood and contaminate water and the immediate environment. Similarly, Ikporukpo (2004: 329) noted that between 1976 and 1996, Shell alone accounts for estimated 4,835 oil spill incidents, which represent 69% offshore, 25% in mangrove areas and 6% of drier land in the Niger Delta region.

Notwithstanding, some of the underlying principle while oil spills persist in the Niger Delta is identified as:

### **Regulatory/Institutional Failure**

The lack of appropriate regulation and the political will to enforce environmental regulations is unarguably the major cause of oil spills in the Niger Delta. The Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) lack the will power to respond to oil spills caused by the MNOCs that are highly influential within the Nigeria political context. The agencies have identified more than 1,150 oil spill sites abandoned by various oil companies in various communities in the Niger Delta region, which is posing serious threat to the people and the environment (Odoemene 2011). Unfortunately, in many cases, the agencies have neither a helicopter nor a boat to monitor onshore and offshore oil and gas operations and spills given that the Niger Delta region topography is made up of mainly swamps, creeks and deep seas and rely on MNOCs (motor vehicles and boats) for logistics support to investigate degraded spill sites. The regulatory agencies are almost at the mercy of the MNOCs and are wholly reliant on them for logistical support (UNDP 2006; Muller 2010). The lack of technical capabilities undermines the

regulatory agencies' ability to carry out its oversight functions and strikingly inconsistent with the huge oil and gas revenue accruing to the government from oil and gas for over several decades.

In addition, some provisions in the Petroleum Act, Oil Pipeline Act, Associated Gas Re-Injection Act, the EIA Act and other environmental protection regulations promote environmental pollution with a clear violation of individual and community rights. For example, the Associated Gas Re-Injection Act 1979 permits the oil companies to continue to flare gas in any particular field/s provided there is permission from the Minister of Petroleum Resources. Similarly, the provision in the Petroleum Act 1969 and the Land Use Act 1978 makes the producing communities to be susceptible to environmental degradation. More irksome is that environmental protection agencies (DPR and NOSDRA) are not meant to deal with the psychological and emotional damage arising from oil spills. They focus on the physical aspect of degradation, and that explains why the issue of oil spills and other environmental degradation have not received the much needed attention compared to what obtains elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, Section 29(2)(b) of the Land Use Act refers to the Petroleum Act that stipulate a fair and adequate compensation for the disturbance of surface or other rights' be paid to the owner or occupier or licensed or leased land in the producing communities. What constitutes a fair and adequate compensation remains a subject of controversy which leaves the oil and gas producing communities in a serious quagmire and has led to a series of conflicts between the MNOCs, government and oil producing communities in the Niger Delta.

The Oil Pipelines Act confers so much power on the holder of the 'permit to survey' such as right to dig the soil and get free of charge any gravel, sand, clay, stone and other similar substance within any land and within the area covered. It also confers right to cut and remove any trees and other vegetation causing impediment to oil and gas exploration, and to do other acts necessary to ascertain the suitability of establishment of an oil and gas pipelines or ancillary installations. Oil Pipelines Act further averred that any person whose land or interest in land can lodge notice of objection in court of law and state any grounds of objection. According to the provision of the Oil Pipeline Act 1956, consideration of the objection is at the discretion of a Minister of Petroleum, whose interest, at the very least, is to ensure that oil and gas exploration is not hampered, and in most cases, with little or no regard to the environment. Under the Petroleum Act, the Minister is empowered to grant oil prospecting licenses, oil mining lease and allocate oil exploration licenses, but does not take into consideration oil producing communities' consultation and objections. It only allows limited provisions within subsidiary legislation to prohibit or restrict activities that would harm the human population of the affected communities.

### **Sabotage and Theft**

The activities of sabotage, theft, illegal bunkering and artisanal refining have been identified as the major source of oil spills posing serious health and environmental disaster in the Niger Delta. The NNPC (2013) argued that most oil spills in Nigeria occur through sabotage and theft, which represents 59.7% (see table 1 above). This position is consistent with Shell (2014) who maintained that 75% of spills incidence recorded in 2009 to 2013 resulted from intentional third party interference with pipelines and other infrastructure. Similarly, 92% of all the volumes of spills from Shell facilities are from intentional damage (Shell 2014). Specifically arguing, they maintained that around 32,000 barrels of production per day (popd) were stolen from Shell pipelines and other facilities, while the joint venture lost production of

around 174,000 bopd due to shutdown related to theft and other third party interference which translate into several billion of dollars in revenue losses. According to Obenade and Amangabara (2014) the scarcity and high cost of diesel, petrol and kerosene is believed to have created the demand for cheap supplies of locally refined fuels.

**Table 3: Real Cost of Nigerian Oil Theft**

Particulars	Oil Theft in Nigeria
Value of oil theft	An estimated annual value of oil stolen is in the region of about \$3 billion to \$8 billion.
Public costs of oil theft	In 2011, the government estimated to have lost revenue worth several billion dollars. In addition, between 2010 and 2012, the NNPC spent about \$2.3 billion on pipeline security and repairs.
Direct casualties	At the height of conflict in the Niger Delta, there were an estimated 1,000 deaths each year – although not all of these are directly related to oil theft  There are kidnapping associated with oil theft in Nigeria
Environmental costs	In Nigeria, a significant oil spills are linked to crude oil theft.  Pollution of water and soil due to leaks from stolen oil have secondary impacts on human health, livelihoods, food and fuel stocks

*Source: Katsouris and Sayne (2013)*

While the problem of vandalism is most significant and rampant in Nigeria, however the oil and gas producing communities continue to argue that the proportion of oil spills caused by sabotage as opposed to corrosion and equipment failure cannot be accurately determined (Barry 2010). This is because the causes of oil spills in the Niger Delta have not been subjected to any independent assessment or verification. In most instances, the MNOCs are part of the investigation process and have considerable leverage in determining the causes of a spill, which amount to a deeply troubling conflict of interest that is detrimental to the communities (Amnesty International 2014).

Oil theft and illegal refining is striving because of the high level of insurgencies in the Niger Delta region, high cost of crude oil in the international market which has become seemingly low very recently, and more importantly, the scarcity of refined petroleum products in Nigeria. Shell (2014) estimated that crude oil theft and the associated deferred production amount to over 300,000 barrels of oil per day. This is consistent with the view expressed by Obenade and Amangabara (2014) that oil theft and artisanal refining had expanded over the last decade and are responsible for an estimated 150,000 barrels of crude oil stolen every day in Nigerian causing unimaginable environmental and economic devastation. In addition, Shell (2014) argued that theft and sabotage of oil pipeline was responsible for 75% of all oil spill incidents and 92% of all oil volume spilled from facilities operated by the Shell during 2009-2013.

## **Corrosion and Ageing Pipelines**

There are serious questions regarding the age and condition of oil pipelines in Nigeria with regard to industry and international standards (Akpomuvie 2011). By the provision of the Oil Pipeline Act 1956, a 10 years replacement and maintenance of oil and gas pipelines was compulsory to avoid incidents of corrosion and ruptured pipelines resulting in environmental pollution. However, the Oil Pipelines Act fixed the duration of an oil pipeline license for a term not exceeding 20 years in recognition of the fact that after a long time, ageing pipelines are more likely to be prone to stress and corrosion. Unfortunately, in many oil fields across the Ogoniland and other Niger Delta communities as well as many parts of Nigeria, ageing pipelines abound, which have been in use over the past four decades that are overdue for replacement (Omofonmwan and Odia 2009). This is attributable to serious cases of oil spills that have become a major conflict between the operator and the rural communities.

This provision in the environmental regulations on the oil and gas industry is vague and gives little or no serious protection to the communities who live near and around the oil pipelines. For example, Section II (5)(c) of the Oil Pipeline Act 1965 (still in force) prohibits paying compensation for oil spills if it is as a result of default of the aggrieved/affected persons or by a malicious act of a third party. According to Barry (2010) if oil from the pipelines were bunkered by a third party and this led to a spill, the MNOCs would no longer be legally responsible for remediation of the site. Although this may be justifiable, however, over the years, oil companies have often taken advantage of this law and the excuse of sabotage as a defence to incidents of oil spills. Simply claiming act of sabotage by the oil companies negates the claim for compensation, and this explains why most people who seek compensation in court are often denied. The claim of sabotage by MNOCs is mainly to avoid compensation payment if the spill is found to be as a result of equipment failure and corrosion. It must be noted that the prevailing conflict situation in the Niger Delta region leading to constant battles with great dimension between MNOCs and their host communities has created a sense of sabotage, including deliberate attacks on oil and gas pipelines with severe environmental consequences (Odoemene 2011).

## **Equipment Failure**

Even though the incidence of theft and sabotage is considerably high in the Niger Delta (see table 1 above), however, the problem of corrosion and equipment failure, ageing pipeline and human error is far more alarming and worrisome. The increase is due to the fact that the MNOCs operating in Nigeria do not comply with the international standards. Amnesty International and environmentalist in the Niger Delta continue to argue that Shell has not invested considerable energy, pointing to the fact that the issues of sabotage, theft and illegal refining of petroleum as the major cause of oil spills in Ogoniland and the Niger Delta region is defenceless. Describing the worsening oil pipelines situation in Nigeria, William (2002) argued that oil companies take great pains and caution to bury their oil pipelines in the ground out of sight in other countries. Unfortunately, in the Niger Delta region it is laid on the surface of the ground across farmlands and near people's home. This contravenes the regulations, conventional and international standards where pipelines are buried under the ground. This indicates why these pipelines are susceptible to vandalism by oil theft and sabotage.



## **Oil Spills Cleanup and Remediation**

In relation to oil spills cleanup, Environmental Guidelines and Standards for Petroleum Industry in Nigeria (EGASPIN) recommended that it should start within 24 hours when spills occur. For all waters pollution, the guidelines also stipulate that there shall be no visible sheen after the first 30 days irrespective of the extent of the spill. The extent of oil spills in the Niger Delta region suggests that some essential provisions in the EGASPIN are being disobeyed by the oil companies in Nigeria without adequate sanction. This position has also been reaffirmed by the UNEP report. The problem of time lags between the spill event and the site being comprehensively cleaned up which is often being blamed on the local communities rather than failure of the system is not tenable because the issues of access are not the only cause of delays (Amnesty International 2014). There is serious concern in relation to capacity and business as usual scenario on the part of the oil companies that gives no serious consideration to the environment of the local communities. There are issues of lack of trust, infrastructure and development benefit to the local people which are deeply rooted. But Shell and the NOSDRA has dismissed the Amnesty report that they colluded to certify polluted Ogoni oil field as clean, that oil pollution occurs on a continuous basis due to the scale of environmental degradation in the region (Tribune 2015).

Furthermore, the failure of regulatory agencies to exercise the will power to tackle environmental pollution is consistent with the findings of the UNEP report. It shows a lack of proper cleanup of spill sites that is the responsibilities of the operating oil companies who are responsible for cleaning up of oil spills from its facilities whether it is as a result of sabotage, equipment failure and/or human errors. When a spill occurs, it's the responsibility of the oil companies to clean up in line with the existing environmental regulation, but they are not held liable if it is due to the activities of sabotage or without their knowledge. The MNOCs continue to insist that sabotage and vandalism are the basis for high rate of oil spill in the region, but the oil producing communities have argued that there is no independent means of verifying this claim because only oil companies have the technical knowledge to do so. The divergence of opinion has often resulted in conflicts between oil companies and the producing communities.

Most disappointingly and worrisome is that the spill site Shell claimed to have cleanup in Ogoniland failed to achieve regulatory compliance, thus contamination had migrated to ground water with consequences on the local people (UNEP 2011). Consequently, the UNEP report noted the widespread contaminations resulting from the unethical behaviour of channelling spill oil into the creeks are clear indication of a poor cleanup of pollution. Access to cleanup of spill sites is another fundamental problem. Often, there is time lag particularly when access is denied by the protesting communities who are often dissatisfied with the frequent environmental abuse of their immediate environment.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Oil spill in the Niger Delta has reached an appalling magnitude as revealed in the UNEP report of 2011, and also demonstrates the needless environmental injustices which have become a burden for the local people. What are remarkable and deeply frustrating for the communities are the carefree attitude of the oil companies towards environmental management as contained in the UNEP report. It exposes some extremely appalling

environmental abuse in Ogoniland and the adjoining communities with a clear violation of people's right to clean water, air, food and health.

Based on the conclusion above, the following recommendations are made:

There is a need for the government to collaborate with Shell and other MNOCs to take immediate and decisive step to fully implement the UNEP report without further delay. This is imperative to build trust and restore the much needed confidence in the oil producing communities who are the major stakeholder. Where relationship exists between the various stakeholders it becomes lots feasible to gain access to the cleanup site particularly wherever there is major spills.

There is an urgent need for an independent environmental policies and governance with sustained people oriented environmental protection interest, to respond to the problem of oil spills and to monitor MNOCs compliance with international standard. Environmental action must be improved comparably to meet the best industry practices elsewhere in the world that affect the wellbeing of the people of producing communities in the Niger Delta.

There is urgent need for the MNOCs and the government to collaborate with communities to carry out remediation programme as quickly as possible to clean up the backlog of spill sites in Ogoniland. The oil companies must demonstrate a cordial working relationship with the local people.

There is urgent need for the government to expedite action and put necessary measure in place to control and prevent oil theft for illegal refining, sabotage and to carry out regular maintenance and replacement of ageing oil pipelines which causes environmental pollution.

The oil companies and the government to provide socioeconomic activities including health care programmes, economic and social empowerment scheme.

Finally, there is the need to amend the Associated Gas Re-injection Act, the Petroleum Act and the Oil Pipeline Act to reflect the environmental protection of immediate communities and accommodate the rights and privileges of the producing communities who are the major stakeholders. The communities' well-being is fundamental in the entire oil resource management chain to remove the feeling of alienation and disillusionment that has become a tradition and a broken cog in the wheel of development.

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