

THE POLITICS OF GAS FLARING IN NIGERIA NIGER-DELTA AND THE NEGATING CONTOURS: THE BASIS OF THE LOOMING CRISIS

Okechukwu, Groupson-Paul UC. PhD

groupsonpaul@yahoo.com

Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo (FUNAI),
Abakaliki – Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Abstract

Nigeria flares 180bn cm of natural gas per year in relation to the exploration of crude oil in the Niger Delta. This gas flaring expends huge amounts of energy and causes environmental pollution, degradation and disease that is also prone to climate change with a huge implication to development and economic gains. The study tries to link oil exploration and exploitation trajectory as a cause of numerous environmental, health and social problems of the oil producing communities. The political intrigues show lack of sincerity in the management of the situation posed by the flaring. This study, utilizes primary and secondary data from a key informants drawn from the communities. Analytical, historical and descriptive approaches with quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the investigation. The study revealed that carbon monoxide level of ambient air exists in many communities. The study finds out that the reduction of gas flaring can improve human health conditions. The work observed that Nigerian loss huge fund for not making earnings from the wasted gas, therefore affecting the economy. The study finds that local livelihood in the Niger Delta had been totally decimated. The study is of the view that there should be a shift from flaring the associated gas to collecting it for use as a gaseous fuel and for electricity generation. The study suggests a viral economic and energy initiatives that would integrate all efforts and policies towards promoting development and improve the life of the people in the Nigerian project.

Key Words: *Pollution, Climate Change, Gas Flaring, Global Warming, Politics
Black Cloud, Political Intrigues, Environmental Degradation.*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, an oil producing state among the nations of OPEC, whose natural endowment had turned out to make her an energy power house with huge wealth in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The sixth (6th) oil producing country in the world, the largest economy in the continent, whose wealth and riches had not march the desires and yearn aspirations of her citizens' wants and expectation due to some avalanche of problems like

lopsided economy, quasi – authoritarian federal structure, ethnic chauvinism, hyper – corruptions dossier, poor leadership and the willful neglects of the teeming mass public, that invariably implicates and showcase the attributes of a failed human capital and infrastructural development state.

According to investigation, oil production has been ongoing in Nigeria

for more than 56 years together with the flaring of natural gas. But unfortunately, the devastation of this waste gas had never been brought to the fore. Reasons being that the perpetrators and allies had been shielded in a political hocus – pocus paradigm of primitive accumulation and interest aggregations. Thus, Chijoke (2002:1) aptly argued that understanding why this unsustainable practice has lasted for such a long time in the country entails the unraveling of the dynamics of the political influence of the multinational corporations over natural resources management in developing countries like Nigeria. The influences of this multinational corporation do not eliminate the political intrigues of government official and the elites within the circuit of the racket in Niger-Delta oil deals (Douglas, 1995).

Agreed that Nigeria is endowed with quiet a number of natural resources as well as human resources, of which some of the key resources found in the Nigerian environment are limestone, bauxite, bronze, oil and gas, copper, natural forest and resources such as wild life amongst others. Unfortunately, among these enormous resources, only crude oil is being harness over the years. There are also a lot of petroleum products being derived from this crude, amongst, which are the premier motor spirit (P.M.S) the diesel (Agro), kerosene (DPK) low poor fuel oil (Lpfo) high poor fuel oil (Hpfo), methyl, Vaseline jelly, benzene ethanoate, and methylated spirits amongst others.

Gas resources in the same vein has been in its large quantity of over 40trillion cubic feet as Nigerian reserves, begging for exploitation and proper utilization. Its existing quantity had also caused gas flaring over the years with the attendant effect on the immediate environment where the resources are located (Niger Delta). Nowhere in the world have communities been subjected to gas flaring on such a scale as witnessed in Nigeria Niger-Delta region. It is estimated that the cost of volume of gas in Nigeria worth over US\$2.5 billion annually whilst the roaring, toxic flares affect the health and livelihood of Delta inhabitants. Equating this to an estimated 66% of the people that live below poverty line, who are also the sufferers of this environmental degradations and diseases, puts the country at high risk of being under severances and disaster prone state. Although, arguments had arisen as to whether the people or government are responsible, of which many had contended that it might be due to consistent neglect and marginalization on the part of government.

Gas Flare contributes significantly to climate change and affects communities all over the world. With Nigeria per capita GNP lowers than at independence, with rising political instability for a country that relied heavily on mono-economic index it is thereof an appalling waste of resources that the country cannot afford.



Thus, the people of Niger-Delta, where the oil gush out as in a platform of honey comb are many at times made to see no reason that might warrant complains or protest from them. They are only good at been called the oil producing region of Nigeria, whereas the euphoria and goodies that goes with such an accolade eludes the people whose life span had been half spent in the creek and half existing in a perpetual neglect and abandonment with degraded environment, poisoned water, dried up crops and collided and polluted air that defile human breathing. Cyclical exploitation, dislocation, illegal combustion of oils and devastation of the region by both the activities of federal government of Nigeria, the multinational corporation and the gullible elites amongst other interest groups had perpetually pose to denied the people the very available opportunities to taste a good life because of their crazy for cheap oil money that they termed a free gift to mankind. With this kind of attitude, however, one wonders whether if at all there is a responsible government in Nigeria? Why has everyone abandoned all other endowed natural resources to chase cheap oil money? Why is the government so on disturbed with lack of feelings to the plight of the people of Niger-Delta where this gas flaring had caused a great deal of havoc?

Premised on this thrown up issues, this study shall examine the theoretical basis of this study, the historical over of Niger-Delta, the logic of the

investigation, the effects of gas flaring on the followings: the environment, water, farm crops, infrastructures, aqua-lives and forestry among others. And the possible avenues where the government and the multinational corporation are implicated in their duties for failing to manage oil exploration and exploitation well to benefits of the people and growth of the economy.

THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

Mindful of the level of devastations, dislocation and distortions in the Niger Delta owing to the effects of gas flaring and oil exploration, the study adopts the theories of Environmental Pollution and Environmental Degradation. The above theories are combined in the course of the inquiries even though they are examined separately, while the link establishing them to be complementary tools to the research investigation vis-a-vis the events and activities in the Niger Delta that are brought to the fore.

The first is the: **Theory of Environmental Pollution**. Speaking from the perspective of gas flaring, pollution, especially environmental pollution, which comprises of the air, water and land pollution, is otherwise, the sending of impure or unpleasant substances to the atmosphere or environment to either contaminates, or mixed with the air or water with adverse effects and or causes damages of dislocation to the ecosystem of the natural environment. This study in view of the menace of pollution to the environment in Nigeria – Niger Delta,

and as an adopted theory emphasis that pollution, caused by gas flaring is real. Some scholars of this school like Heltland Gloria E. (2010), Bobak, M. Leon (1999), Peter Maull Tim (2010), Pietro P. (2011), Baiardi D. (2010), Uchida Emi (2005), Robert Stavins (2007), Cameron Trudy Ann (2006) and Rachel Carson (1962) among others argued that pollution, which is destructive and hazardous to the environment and people are due to ambient air pollution that has a great effect on health, economy and human productivity.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2002), the general principle that pollution (air), especially from gas flaring, occurs all the time, all day and has a consequential damaging effects on the people is there. This is because the degree of combustion and the emitted CO₂ into the atmosphere is a consistent daily event in human environment, which thereafter causes havoc on lives and living organisms. In support of this notion, Mittermeier (2012) observed that pollution occur when the ecosystem are not safeguarded and are tenaciously exerted with forces greater than the capacity it can absorb. It affects people and society as man depends on nature for health and jobs even in international society. In a plain word, Claudia (2002) aptly noted that pollution may reduce the prestige of people either in organization, occupation or environment. It shows the difference between other groups in work and housing in any environment, because a polluted environment can only

be safe inside and can debase the working environment into isolation, especially, where the air is greatly affected.

In the same vein, Ezzati (2002) opined that air pollution is due to situational prevalence in many localities and states. This is because air pollution and poverty are seen as priority areas for public health intervention. Meaning, that air pollution like gas flaring are more serious health problem as it affects both environment and people. Complementing this further, Heltand, Berck and Maull (2010) argued that physical pollution occurs because it is virtually impossible to have a productive process that involves no waste. They went further to accentuate that pollution occurs because polluting is less expensive than operating cleanly.

Implicit on these analogies, it is evidence that gas flaring causes air pollution. Air pollution itself is destructive to human health, which can have adverse effect on both environment and the general society. However, this theory, combined with the next theory stands to give the study a clear basis for argument and analysis in arriving at our desired result.

Secondary, the Theory of Environmental Degradation.

According to the scholars of this school, like Meyers R. (1985) Jack D. Ives (1987), Cameron Truddy Ann (2006) G.M.P. de Silva (1991) and Steven Shavell (2010) among others,



environmental degradation create a huge loses to the economy and it is link to other problems that denied the environment the natural gifts that ought to benefit man. Agreeing to this notion, De Silva (1991) aptly noted that apart from destruction of forested areas, wetlands, grasslands and bodies of water arises because of the difference between the discount rate of the individual and the society as a whole, environmental degradation could be increase when the people (poor) presses for fuel, fodder, water, land cultivation and or explorations for natural resources. He went further to argue that it is the private increases on land or environmental exploration that create intense pressure, thereby devastating the land surface. This kind of exploitation on the environment for resources to sustain livelihood helps to add to the societal woos.

In support of the notion, Ives (1987) opined that environmental degradation in recent time shows that many areas or region are rapidly evolving crisis. This is because the theory on which development planning and implementation are based confuses cause and effect and ignores the great complexity of the region and the people. On this statement, Meyers (1985) argued that environmental degradation is as a result of the cost of land clearance arising from exploitation of natural resources for financial gain that highlight the problems involved all too clearly, since these resources provide a myriad of functional processes, which

go beyond the clearly tangible areas of providing food and product for commerce. He went further to state that the loggers, farmers and builders among others can create environmental degradation through their exploits of the range and grassland and water resources, which in turn creates dislocation and distortion on the environment.

Inference to these notions, shows that the desires to explore mineral resources and the fell of trees can result into a highly productive potential of the area being threatened, especially if the area or quality of the soil remains poor. Therefore, environmental degradation combines with pollutions either land or air due to exploration and the inserting of high forces on the soil surface can be devastating to the environment. These combined actions are not in any way different from what the study observed and witnessed in the Nigerian Niger-Delta environment.

Imperative on this, the monumentus exploitation and cyclical exploration of oil in the region by both the indigenous and Multinational Corporations (MNC) bodies and allies has exposed the entire region into a risk environment clearly confirmed the havoc of pollution and environmental degradation. While this air pollution, water pollution, land degradation and distortion are vehemently noticed, the questions are: what are the government doing to stopping or reduce the level destructions? Why are the people who had suffered such a terrible distortion on

their soil be abandoned to fate? What is the role of the Niger-Delta leaders toward ameliorating this degradations and sufferings? What are the risk of living in this kind of environment where life and society are hostile to the populace? Has the present government being able to rise up to its responsibilities?

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NIGER-DELTA OIL AND, GAS FLARING

The area called the Niger Delta, which was formerly known as the Oil Rivers or the British Oil Rivers protectorate, with about 70,000km is made up of 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass of today Abia state, Akwa-Ibom state, Cross River state, Edo state, Imo state, Delta state, Rivers state, Ondo state and Bayelsa state due to government new legislation in 2000 (Ifedike, 2012). The area also houses over 40 ethnic groups including the Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Igbo, Isoko, Urhobo, Ilaje, Yoruba and the Kalabari amongst others.

In Nigeria, with the discovery of oil at Olobiri in the oil Rivers in the late 1950s, to which the development and exploration of crude expanded the sector for many years. Gas flaring, at the same time began in Nigeria (Isiguzo, 2012). But one unfortunate thing is that while Nigeria became the biggest producer of petroleum in Black Africa with an increase of over 2 million barrel (320,000m³) of crude in a day, gas flaring, and its hazards effects were not being appropriated or checkmated until

this injurious period. Thereby, increasing the level of environmental problems and human devastations records. These actions, according to Anyanwu (2013), were noted to have been operated by Multinational Corporation (mostly, the Royal Dutch Shell and Shell BP, Agip, Chevron, Conoco, Slumberg, Total and Texaco among others) who in turn helped in providing the Nigerian state with necessary technology and financial resources. The interest in this necessary aspect with the existed effective overture has a long term problematic consequences on the populace. Thus, on whether it was probably ignored willfully or by sheer negligence left much to be desired with the attendant results as it was not long as expected before the causal effects.

Meanwhile, beginning from the period of oil exploration in Nigeria, there had been international controversies, which seems to centre on who is actually in control, and what seems also to ask what are the fate of the host communities, all these lingered. With the internationalization of oil business and the concomitant drive for oil wealth by both friends and foes of Nigeria with the connivance of the elites, Apam (2011), observed that the stage was not only set for the effective actions that were central to the possible devastation, pollution ecocide, kleptocracy, gas flaring, environmental degradation and human rights abuses to which some of the multinational corporation were implicated in several quarters as been



anti-human in operation and co-habitation.

However, from this period henceforth, one naughty event after the other followed. The question on who actually was in control of the Nigeria oil wells in the Niger-Delta become an issue? What was the position of the military governments then? Why do the multinational corporations resolved in using diplomatic recognition of regime to keep in power who does their biddings with a huge oil exchange as international praise-singers in the eye of the world? Do the people of Nigeria-Niger Delta have a say to the oil gushing out of their domain? How enlightened were they to fight the course of the itemized issues in controversy? Does this suggest that the Niger Delta problem was not contemporary, but from the origin of discovery to exploration, and now to the advance exploration era?

On this lingered questions, this study tends to points out at the whole problem of gas flaring as one aspects of the numerous problems of the Niger Delta region. The pains of the affected communities and people might not probably be a disturbance to the government that is driven by the quantum of revenue generation through oil exploration. The burning of gas into the air and the unconcerned attitude of government points to the premeditated years of neglect of the people of the region.

Thus, partly agreeing with Dede (2010) that despite the huge economic gains on oil, that one naivety that had confronted the whole situation, particularly on the government side, was the issue of not minding the devastating effect of oil exploration, but only interested in the wealth and turnover. A crude idea of capitalist orientation where life and destruction means nothing compared to value and gains of profit. Meaning that the issue of gas flaring is not what government can waste resources in tackling headlong, a political intrigues portraying the government and their international partners - the multinational corporations, as not concerned to the health hazard and its detrimental effects on the communities. In support of this Ifedike (2012:2-3), argued that the superfluous quantity of oil, together with gas extraction comprising of over 97% of Nigeria's foreign exchange revenue was what the parties were concerned of. This is because the natural gas extracted in oil wells in the Delta is immediately burned or flared, thereby causing over 70 million m³ per day that also formed the largest single source of greenhouse gas emission on the planet earth. The consequence of this hereby implies that climate change devastation, could be imminent in the Delta region and the sub-Saharan Africa in general.

In the word of Climate of Justice Programme (2005), and the Urhobo Historical Society (2003), this constitute the biggest gas flaring in Nigeria. The activities of these multinational corporations however failed to attend to

the problems of this region as if they do not exist on the same earth surface. The region, their protests and campaigns were seen as baseless, economic sabotage and treasonable crime against the Nigerian state, since the federal government by law owed all land and its resources. This attitude, Stanley (2013) observed, is the cause of the consistent restiveness and aggressive orientations on the helpless, jobless, hopeless and confused youths of the region even to this day.

**THE LOGIC OF
INVESTIGATIONS OF GAS
FLARING IN NIGER DELTA AND
THE DAMAGING EFFECTS ON
THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

On field investigation, this study took a tour of six gas flaring sites located in six communities in the heart of Niger Delta as there were several, and other pockets of oil explorations sites.

Such communities as: Ebocha – Egbema, Oboma, Rumuekpe, Patani, Bomadi and Okpoloma among others formed the study locations and sites. The sample populations are the men, women and even visitors to these communities. Under the sample and sampling procedure, the study concentrated on the members of the local communities within the six chosen communities, and possibly residents. Imperative on the inquiry, the following data were collected and analyzed, thus: the inquiry utilizes both primary and secondary data. The primary data adopts perceptive study that is, getting to know how the

inhabitants or the people in the Niger Delta communities perceive gas flare in the area; how the people feel about gas flare. In this process, a few unstructured questions were posed to them in order to get the perceptions of dwellers about the hazard. The questions, between five and ten or more were used in the selected communities, especially Ebocha-Egbema community that was used as the research base, so as to get the necessary information needed for the work.

The questions are designed to get accommodate personal information of persons, which was never a barrier nor was it taken into cognizance in the course of analysis as they were all victims of the same gas flaring. The second group of questions was designed to get the causes of gas flaring in the Niger Delta. While the third sets of questions are designed to get the impact, effect and problems created by gas flaring amongst the visited communities and the possibility of how gas flaring can be control and or useful to the host communities and the nation in particular, since gas flaring itself is an artificial phenomenon which occurs in the Niger Delta.

The interview, which was on the key informants in the selected communities, was obtained using the simple percentage level of the response with chi-square as a means of analysis. Although, as stated earlier, among the socio-economic characteristic of the people, the sex of the respondents, percentage responses, and effect of gas



flares had remained imperative in the course of interacting with people of the selected communities, which was duly

considered as victims of the causes of gas flaring.

Table 1: Distribution of Population by Sex.

Sex	Distribution						Total	%
	A	B	C	D	E	F		
Male	9	7	6	6	7	5	40	57.2%
Female	6	5	6	5	4	4	30	42.8%
Total	15	12	12	11	11	9	70	100

Source: Fieldwork, February 2014.

Where the alphabets in the table above represents the name of the sites as follows: A = Ebocha-Egbema, B = Obama, C = Rumuekpe, D = Patani, E = Bomadi and F = Okpoloma. In general observation, it is noted that of the people interviewed as above, that 57.2% (40) are male while 42.8% (30) are female as seen in the data above. From Table 1, above, shows the distribution of response per sex and the total number thereof. It is clear that majority of those interviewed in the course of the inquiry are male population from Ebocha-Egbema (9), Bomadi (7) and Obama (7). While Rumuekpe (6) and Patani (6) have equal number of key informants. It is only Okpoloma (5) that have less respondents amongst the interviewed informants.

However, to get the percentage of the responses, some of the unstructured questions put before the respondents are:

Is gas flaring an environmental friendly? Does it boost the health condition of the people? Is it economically advantageous to means of livelihood? Does it have any negative effect on the communities experiencing it? Does gas flaring have human factor or artificial factor? Is it prone to unhealthy living? Does government cum agents or oil firms have stake in gas flaring hazards on the people? What is the probability that government cum oil firms are not benefiting from the wastage of gas flaring?

Sequel to the posed questions above, the responses obtained was grouped into a simple percentage sum as shown below according to the responses from individual communities for simplicity and easy comprehend since the selected communities are victims of the same hazard – gas flaring.

Table 2 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSE FROM INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES

Letter	A	B	C	D	E	F	CUMT.	CUMT. %
M	60%	58%	50%	55%	64%	56%	343%	57.2%
F	40%	42%	50%	45%	36%	44%	257%	42.8%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	600%	100%

Where: $\text{Simple \%} = \frac{\text{number}}{\text{Total}} \times 100$

- M = Male percentage of response
- F = Female percentage of response
- CumT = Cumulative Total
- CumT. % = Cumulative Total Percentage
- Letters A – F = Represent the name of communities

In view of the above posed questions and many others, the key informants were grouped into both male and female as a way of having a general overview of the response of each community affected by the incidence of gas flaring. In table 2, above, there is great difference between the male respondent and their female counterpart as 60% of men to 40% of the female at Ebocha-Egbema Community indicate that the men are reactive and vocal in their condemnation of the menace of gas flaring in their community than the women are below average, showing that the level of awareness are not high and also not forceful. It also proved that the men have more say in the community than the women who seemed to be more concerned on family and domestic front than the menace plaguing them. This does not mean that they are in any way in support of the devious act of gas flaring in the area. The investigation noted that some of the factor informing the low slide in the women role is due to shame-shy in facing reality, like the

destructive role of gas flaring in their community.

At Oboma community, the men with 58% and the women with 42% showed a remarkable change in the reaction of women even when the men still had upper hand. Both sex however, were out to express their displeasure over the dislocation of their community by the menace of gas flaring. Everybody was aware of the consequence and the environmental effects on lives and livelihood. So, the reactions of condemnation were encouraging.

In Rumuekpe, against the level of degradation and distortion in the community, both men and women with 50% each were highly aware and was no way ready to compromise their rights. The women show strong measure of protest in letting those concerned to their predicament to understand their plight. The 50% equal to the voice and stand of the men expresses the level of deep anger and pain on their household,



especially in trying to make an end meet from devoured land, water, crops and plants affected by several forms of infections and pollutants. The men were also intense seeing the degree of support they gather from their spouse in letting the world know the kind of game the oil companies and government officials are using them to play in the continued incidence of gas flaring. The havoc that had destroyed their means of livelihood and human existence going by the degree of plaguing diseases and high level of vulnerability of the community to policies of deception and denial.

At Patani community, where the coastal line and waterways was rendered no safety zone for both human and aquatic live survival, the peoples' pain and anger are not only against the community leaders and the Nigeria government official, but the percentage response show that both the men (55%) and the women (45%) are keenly aware of the level of destruction on their environment. This informed the inciting of the youth of the area to indulge in seizing or kidnapping some staff of the oil workers unless compensation and better deal are agreed upon by all the parties, since their environment is not habitable as skin disease, cough and other terminal diseases had infested the community.

At Bomadi, the men dominate in the cry for justice against the menace of gas flaring and other related disaster encroaching the area. The men with 64% against the women 36% was seen in the

course of the research as the docile nature of the women of the area who would preferred their husband or male folks to take their role as headship of family. The weaknesses of the women also display a source of worry to the men who needed encouragement to fight their rights violations by the oil companies and the federal government of Nigeria. In another realm, it seemed the women's weakness is located on the delay and neglect of the area vis-à-vis the several years that they had complained and cried over this gas flaring menace. The men on the other hand might not relent in engendering the continued struggle against environmental and human rights violation in their community by the oil explorers.

In the case of Okpoloma community, found deep inside the creek with no arable or land space for cultivation, the men and women were highly aware of the degradation and destruction of lives in their water front as fish and other water food are consistently destroyed. The men with (56%) and the women (44%), indicates that there was a relative coherency in the condemnation of the activities of oil exploration in their community and its consequence gas flaring menace, which had devastated and destroyed every means of livelihood. The community lives on water that is highly polluted. The corrosion of wrings on the water surface and the dead of plant and vegetation explain the kind of lives observed in the coastal line where gas flaring, oil spillage and environmental degradation

had placed many of the host communities in the Niger Delta in a state of mercy and pity of visitors.

However, in the final collation, the study had a cumulative total percentage of 57.2% for the male over 42.8% for the female. This calculation still informed from the separate individual community response to the cumulative % that the male are more aware and are at the same time in the forefront of the struggle against the menace of gas flaring that had invariably devastated their communities in the coastal line of the Niger Delta.

In the investigation, the 100% sum in the addition to each community responses shows the coherence and strength of the people in realizing the menace of gas flaring on the environment, while at the same time speaking out to the international human rights group, Amnesty International and the International community to visit and conduct survey on what they had been complaining about over the level of destruction and neglect of the Niger Delta host communities by both the oil companies and the Nigeria government. The investigation also revealed that there are indeed gas flaring hazard in Niger Delta host communities like Ebocha-Egbema, Oboma, Rumuekpe, Patani, Bomadi and Okpoloma communities of Niger Delta coastal line.

THE EFFECTS OF GAS FLARING IN NIGER DELTA

Obviously, it is evidence that air pollution has been the resultant effect from gas flaring. This has greatly affected the inhabitants of the host communities in the Niger Delta where oil exploration and environmental distortion had been going on for long. Thus, Isiguzo (2012) observed that gas flaring is mostly felt in the communities close to the site of the flare. Some of the effects of gas flare on the Niger Delta are noticeable in the following areas:

- i. Health**
- ii. Farms**
- iii. Fishing/Aquatic life**
- iv. Pollution (Air/Water)**

In this regard, Carson (1962), argued that this kind of pollution affects every human being from the region from the moment of conception to death. Although, gas flare problem varies from one community to another depending on the severity of the flare in some of the communities as noted in the course of inquiry. In the same vein, the investigation of this study revealed through the data collected that the effect of gas flare on the above itemized fields of human environment was heinous and devious. The table below shows the degree of response and the resultant percentage of the effect on each host community.

Table 3 EFFECTS OF GAS FLARING ON SELECTED COMMUNITIES

communities	A		B		C		D		E		F		CUMT/%	
	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%
Affected Areas														
Health	6	40	5	41	4	33	4	36.4	5	45.5	3	33	27	228.9
Farming	4	27	3	25	3	25	3	27.3	3	27.3	2	22	18	153.6
Fishing	2	13	2	17	2	17	2	18.2	1	9.1	2	22	11	96.3
Pollution	3	20	2	17	3	25	2	18.2	2	18.2	2	22	14	120.4
Total	15	100	12	100	12	100	11	100.1	11	100.1	9	99	70	599.2

Using simple percentage model of calculation:

- Where r = Number of response to the effect of gas flares
- % = Percentage of the response on flared gas
- CUMT = Cumulative Total/Percentage
- Letter A to F = Representing each community as already designated above.

ANALYSIS OUTCOME

i. EFFECTS ON HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE

The study in a general collation had about 27 key informant interviewed, spreading the six communities with a cumulative percentage of 228.9% out of the expected 230%. The imbalance being the error incurred in the process of collection. In the result that followed, it is noted that the response on how gas flare affects the people of each community differ from one to the other. In Ebocha-Egbema, with 6(40%), the effects of the gas flare amongst the people shows that the incident is at a higher degree since it has crossed the benchmark of degree of seriousness amongst the people. In Obama community, the recorded figure of 5(41%) of the effect also show a degree

of serious amongst the people. Although, at Patani with 4(36.4%), it could not cross the point or met the benchmark, but the low effect shows a degree of near seriousness. Meaning that there is a tendency of increase in the level of effects on the people if not control. The result also shows no significance difference between Rumuekpe 4(33%) and Okpoloma 3(33%). This means that the effect of gas flare on the people is still at its lower degree but has the tendency to grow to the level of seriousness if not checked and controlled.

Taken cognizance that all the communities are directly affect with one measure of high, seriousness, serious and otherwise, it is imperative to point out that the general health condition of

the people are under a serious threat. The study also informed that gas flaring increases the risk of respiratory illnesses, asthma, impaired lung function and cancer (Brunekreef and Holgate, 2002). It is also noted to have often causes painful breathing, chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, body itching, blindness, impotency, and premature death amongst others, which made Ige (2007) to attest that at Ebocha-Egbema general Hospital some patients were furious over the effects of gas flaring on them. There, also observed among many inhabitants some cases of poor vision, mortality and morbidity, cough and skin diseases among the younger inhabitants. These health problems are blamed grossly on oil production activities in the Niger Delta, to which gas flaring is a bye-product. Its effects also cause reduction in lives expectancy, birth outcome and perpetual black cloud in the environment (Maull and Berck, 2010).

**ii. THE EFFECTS ON FARMS/
FARMING**

The general effect of gas flaring on farms and farming processes were also noted to have affected the set benchmark of 155%, whereas the general recorded mark is 153.6% with 18 cumulative total instead of the recorded 20 point. The farms and farming projects at Ebocha-Egbema 4(27%), Patani 3(27.3%) and Bomadi 3(27.3%) were highly affected by the hazard of gas flaring, while Obama 3(25%) and Rumuekpe 3(25%) were average in term of destruction of farm crops and harvest. Okpoloma is

2(22%) showing low effects but with the tendency of increasing.

The general implication shows that economic trees, crops and plants are greatly affected. Thus, Okene (2008) in seeing the havoc caused by gas flaring at Ebocha-Egbema detested the degree of gas been flares into the air. He averred how a stump of what was once a coconut tree met its untimely death owing to the menace of gas flaring in the area. This degree of plant and animal farms destruction in the community indicates that the hazard of gas flare in the studied communities informed of the awful damage on the Niger Delta.

It also means that the years of petroleum production in the coastal states have rendered lands unproductive, poisoned the waters and forests while making the environment generally inhabitable in the Niger Delta. To the farm animals in the host communities, the research noted at Bomadi and Patani that most animals like goat, grasscutter, sheep, poultry and birds are seriously infected by virus and some inhaled diseases.

**iii. THE EFFECT ON FISH/
FISHING AND AQUA-LIFE**

The people of the Niger Delta coastal line are renowned for their fishing and aquatic life exploits, but the robust business for which they are known for many years had been cut short by the incidence of gas flaring. All the communities were greatly affected as the percentage of this effect shows that it is highly noticed at Okpoloma with 22%.



Meaning that fishing, which is their only means of livelihood had been greatly affected by the pollutant from gas flaring which invariably kill the fishes and other economic aquatic life in the water and streams in the community. Patani, with 18.2% also suffers the same economic loss of aquatic life due to the acidity of water and streams that might have been the only source of existence of the fishes. The record at both Oboma - 17% and Rumuekpe - 17% shows that there is similarity in the effect as most fishing water are great poisoned by the CO₂ emissions from the gas flaring. Though, Ebocha-Egbema - 13% share the same number but different percentages, just like others, but it does not mean that it hasn't its own challenges as life of fishermen and fishing in the area had been greatly devastated.

Against the fact that gas flaring rendered the environment generally inhabitable, the coastal line and live inside water and water ways are dislocated and distorted by the menace of gas flaring. With the acidic content of most waters in the investigated communities, their means of existence, fishing had been greatly destroyed by the colour and cloudy black look of the most water in these communities. The ecosystems in this investigated communities had shown that brackish swamp forests, water changing to charcoal-black slippery to kill aquatic lives like fish and others becomes the attendant phenomena in almost all the Niger Delta coastal lines. This water contamination affects the fish population and affects the fishermen that

rely on fishing to support their family (Ifedike, 2008).

iv. **EFFECTS OF AIR/WATER POLLUTION**

The table 3.3.1 above had shown that gas flaring also cause air or water pollution. The effects of this on both water and air also helped to increase the degree of havoc on the environment and human lives. In the collected results percentage, Rumuekpe with 25% experienced a high degree effect of gas flaring that were on the increase both on air and water pollution combined.

The other communities like Okpoloma, 22% and Ebocha-Egbema 20%, showing a different result was due to the fact that the numbers and the percentages are different. Although, one interesting thing about this result is that both has a high incidence of air/water pollution owing to gas flaring. To Patani, with 18.2% and Bomadi with 18.2%, while Oboma has 17% indicates that there is the likelihood of a gradual or daily increase and or reduction, which is possible. Omeje (2006), on this observation, asserts that despite the substantial revenue from oil production, Nigerian continues to suffer from environmental degradation associated to gas flaring. This probably also might place Nigeria as the second largest gas flared in the world. In submission, Okonta and Oronto (2003), reiterated that the rate of gas flaring in Niger Delta and emissions contributes significantly to global warming, which composed of toxic gases such as sulfur oxide (SO²),

nitrogen oxide (NO²), benzapryene, toluene, xylene and hydrogen sulfide (HSO²) amongst others, thereby imposing negative effect on the environment and people.

However, going by level of politicking in attending to the issue of gas flaring and willful abandonment of the host communities to their fate by the government and the oil firms, to which the degree of degradation and environmental destructions as noted by this investigation exemplified, it is evidence that there is a grave contour in oil exploration management in Niger-Delta. The inferences arrived at using both Human and Artificial factors also helped to further the research intention in finding out the causal effects of gas flaring in the Niger Delta. The evidence deduced from that observation showed that the enabling laws were willfully disregarded, violated and abandoned by both the oil firms and their government allies, thereby leaving the people of the area to die in their predicaments. This level of politicking also informs that there are some community leaders who convince with the government and oil companies to distort and dislocate the vulnerable members of the community. Thereby exposing the element of insincerity in treating gas flaring default despite its negative implications.

THE POLITICS OF GAS FLARING: NIGERIA GOVERNMENT AND THE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION'S ROLES UNFORGOTTABLE

Based on the investigations of this study, it is agreeable that gas flaring is real in Nigeria Niger-Delta by virtue of being an oil producing state with over 180 billion cubic feet of natural gas. This affirmation also coincides with the fact that the act of safety disposal of waste gases through combustion in Nigeria has been at a high magnitude for a long time since the inception of oil exploration without any solution in sight. It is also evidence that the menace had combined with environmental degradation caused by oil spillage, land slid and other natural disasters to cause untold hardships on the people of the localities of the Niger Delta. Some basic questions that then strike the mind toward unraveling this evil acts are: Do government exists at all in Nigeria? If yes, is there any legislations as regarding the monitoring and controlling of the activities of the MNC firms in term of oil exploitation and environmental distortions? Who manages oil exploration in Nigeria? Is it the Nigerian state or the MNCs? What are the stakes of the host communities' vis-à-vis oil exploration benefits, developments and the consequential effects of flared gas in their communities?

Considering the above raised questions, and whether gas flaring is normal in any oil producing environment, Chijoke



(2002) argued that it is a common practice in the oil production process, but the Nigerian case attracts more attention given the volume of gas flared since the beginning of commercial oil production in the country. This, he further argued in comparison, that social responsibility attitude towards gas conservation in Nigeria and Canada are different, because the demand partly due to environmental requirements in Canada and other advanced countries does not apply in Nigeria. The point of emphasis here is that the Nigerian government legislation seems to be weak towards monitoring and controlling the activities of the MNC oil companies as each operates on different spheres while playing the hocus-pocus game of relying on the existing laws. A political intrigue that played itself against the cry and protest of the people of the communities on the hazardous effects of flared gas was seen in the proposed legislation on the menace of gas flaring, since the investigation above has identified artificial factors as the cause of flared gas in the region. A bill was however proposed by a private person on how to checkmate the nefarious activities of the oil companies, but it was blocked by government agents who benefit from the oil companies in the year 2000. According to the arguments put forward by Chijoke (2002), Oronto (2003), Okereke (2007), Ukala (2011) and Omeje (2010), in this respect, the weakness in the government push to reduce the excesses of gas flaring seem to yield no result as nothing is happening toward solving the endemic

of gas flaring. Chijoke (2002) further revealed that even oil producing companies in the country jointly attacked the proposed policy legislation as technically infeasible. To this effect, the companies argued that accelerating the flare programme is unrealistic, knowing that it is national policy and not private.

According to Oronto and Okonta (2003) the Nigeria government, probably on what they are gaining from the oil firms through its agents are misinformed and at the same time not committed to solving the problem of gas flaring. This is because the problem is more to what the people see than to what is actually taking place in the Niger Delta communities where these gases are flared with impurity and as also explained in the above investigation report. The failure of Nigeria government in asserting its strength to control and reduce gas flaring may likewise be agreed with Chijoke (2003) and Kalu (2006), who also notes that by the federal government acting on the dictates of the oil companies shows that it had relegated the health, life span and environment of many well-being Nigerians to the background. The essence of the government to monitor and control all the oil business are to create a healthy and conducive atmosphere to all players and stakeholders, but when the opposite becomes what the people are seeing at Ebocha – Egbema, Obioma, Patani, Okpoloma, Rumuekpe and Bomadi among others where gas flaring sites and the atmosphere turns black cloud daily with

several emissions, then the issue of do we have any government in Nigeria becomes the reasonable questions on the lips of both the victims and the onlookers. Much so, simply stating the obvious that oil exploration and exploitation processes has been mismanaged, to which the contours are the present detrimental effects on the host communities.

In tandem to all the expressed views, it is culpable for the federal government to accept the frenzy excuse of the oil companies that the technologies needed to mitigate gas flaring is presently beyond their reach, hence their demand for sufficient time to acquire such (Chijoke, 2002). This is because for haven operated in the Nigerian soil for more than five decades with such lapses, it means that their action had been a case of willful damage, calculated distortion and destructions of lives and environment of the affected areas of the Niger Delta as informed by this research investigations. This is because it makes the whole issue of gas flaring a problematic one and a mark of irresponsibility that had continually encouraged the unabated unhealthy practice in the Niger Delta for the government not to be in-charge of oil management.

On the other hand, Chijoke (2002) argued that if the government can provide the platform to mitigate gas flaring to the barest minimum, the oil firms will certainly provide the way to do it in terms of technological

application. But it appears that both the government and the MNCs are living on hocus-pocus paradigm since the idea of ending gas flaring in the Niger Delta are never certain. Evidence available according to Ted Case Studies (1998) showed that the above mentioned communities have been severely damaged by environmental pollution from oil spills, dumping of waste products, burning of excess gases, pipeline leaks, oil well blowout, gas flaring operations and widespread ecological disturbances. This long-based failed management of gas flaring did not only form and informed the basis of the degree of politicking in matters concerning these areas on the issues of environmental destruction, gas flaring and consistent pollutions that had go on unabated for years, but had also gone further to impoverished the people due to environmental degradation from oil production and the lack of adequate regulations on MNC companies to operate as they become more vulnerable to food shortages, health hazards, loss of land, pollution, forced migration and unemployment.

This political instruments always used against the oppositions and protesters are political intrigues of diplomacy that had for long been applied to eliminate the people of Niger Delta against the willful balkanization, decimation and subjugation of their rights of existence. The Nigerian government and security forces employed this act of politicking with pretentious approach of scapegoating, haven been responsible



for the extrajudicial executions of some villagers in Rivers State for protesting against environmental damages and land destructions. At Warri and other environs, for instance, the only time one can breathe good air is if the person is inside an air-conditioned room as heat and dehydration are often recorded even when rain is falling in the city due to the ravaging effects of gas flared into the atmosphere. The social and environmental cost of this incident is politically seen as cheap blackmail against the government of the day in responding to protest and complains.

Although, the government in several respects have set up probe panels, commission of inquiry and other fact finding bodies on this issue of gas flaring with even huge amount of money been spent in trying to curb the menace of gas flaring, but the ends are never visible nor result oriented. Curbing flared gas as seen at Patani, Bomadi, Okpoloma, Rumuekepe, Ebocha–Egbema and Obioma among others could substantially offer oil field operators significant safety and so many economic and environmental advantage to other stakeholders, if there should be element of sincerity of the state administrators and co-partners in the oil business in handling of the menace.

THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF GAS FLARING

Having knowledge of the fact that the people of Niger Delta are now aware against all the manners of manipulations and antics, including the usage of the

region as the spoilers in the Nigerian political system in the time past by some government agents, allies and cabals in the successive governments in collaboration with the national comprador bourgeoisies and foreign partners with fake and illegal oil blocks had been existing under hide and seek game of deception to short change the state supposedly responsibility to its people. The groups, encouraged suppression and intimidations with the use of the coercive instrument of the state with some element of diplomacy, cheap blackmails and or outright annihilation of the indigenous people in order to have their way had rendered the region perpetually impotent.

The restive youths or militants on the order hand had in recent time and even before and after the amnesty programme resolved to contribute to the gas flaring menace as they still steal crude and sell to international oil merchants on the high sea in exchange of arms and ammunicions while building pockets of illegal refineries in the creeks to flare associated gas to the air. In some instance they destroyed oil installations of Shell BP, Agip oil, Texaco, Total, Chevron and host of others in order to cause oil spillage or oil explosion which contribute gravely to enhance the combustion of gas into the atmosphere.

The Nigerian government and the international oil merchants and explorers had however, not been able to tell the Nigerian state the true state of things in the Niger Delta. The huge

benefits garner by the government and the multinational companies and their home governments seemed to have no regard for the life of the people of the region. This is because it is the youths or militants protest, incursion and distortion of their interest in the oil region that had probably informed their change of policies and tactics, which have not been reflected on the issues of gas flaring and communities' destructions.

THE GENERAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLITICISATION OF GAS FLARING ACTIVITIES

In view of the investigated cases of gas flaring as noted at Patani, Bomadi, Okpoloma, Obioma, Ebocha – Egbema and Rumuekpe and as still ongoing in some other locations in the Niger Delta, the failure of the government to attaining a terminal flare in Nigeria indicates that there are deep-seated neglect and abandonment of the communities investigated above with entire Niger-Delta region being affected.

On the reasons that the law makers from the region and the southern part were only handpicked or selected to bid the course of the godfathers who also control and benefits from oil productions, not much will be expected in pushing to tackling the issue of gas flaring, thereby abandoning the people their fates.

The hollow implication of this is that since there is no enabling regulation to control and reduce gas flaring endemic,

due to the non-push full forces of the lawmakers from the region to sponsor or encourage those that have intention for that to introduce a bill, the region and its existed situation will remain defame and debase toward attaining healthy environment no matter the amount been pumped there by the NDDC or government.

The region, on the persisted health hazard emanating from the pollutions and devastations might in the near years experience a high incident of disabilities among generation of children. This devastating deformities may affect one per every family, ranging from the epidemics of asthma, cancer, lungs goiter, chronic bronchitis, premature deaths, stunt growth, skin burns, coarse skin, stillbirth, abnormalities in conception and other terminal and infectious diseases owing to inhaled or consumed CO₂ and other health hazard ailments and damages.

The grave implication that accompanied such abnormalities in a society may result in what psychologist called growing incidences of delusion, traumatisation and maladjustments of citizens. Simply, because such infirmities leading to societal disorder and death may impose long term effects on the communities while at the same time creating disaffection and distrust between govern and the governed.

The worst devastating implications of this menace is that the people and the government loses a huge fund treating



sickness of different symptoms to which even the amount spent in fighting the impediments and pathogens may outnumber the amount that would have been used to pay compensation. The destruction of ecosystem, release of toxic components into the atmosphere and a facilitating aid of climate change devastations, may lead to the exposure of the people to benzene, resulting into a new cases of cancer since almost all the gas flaring sites located at the local communities lack adequate fencing or protection for villagers who may risk working near heat of the flare.

The destructive implications of flared gas might cause human tissues damage by obstructing the free flow of blood in the vein as the cuts in turn cause cell damages and movement through the blood vessels. In addition to this, gas flaring and venturing produce more greenhouse-gas emissions than any other single source in Africa South of the Sahara. It is obvious also that the havocs in the region might equally have contributed to the Nigeria weak economy despite huge mineral resources. Thus, with over 67% of the Nigerian population living below poverty level, the Niger Delta region alone houses 36% of poor people. It is evident that lack of political will, political scheming, avalanche of greed and corrupt elites with government mismanagement of natural resources had contributed immensely in the politicization of every activities and even life in the region, all in the bid to make quick money.

CONCLUSION AND POSSIBLE SUGGESTIONS

Evidence available shows that Niger Delta, made up of Delta state, Rivers state, Bayelsa state and the neighbouring states of Akwa Ibom, Abia, Imo, Ondo, Cross River and Edo states amongst others covers 20,000km within the wetland of 70,000km, with over 20 million people and over 40 different ethnic groups that formed the main hob of the oil exploration and gas flaring centers (Ifedike, 2008). Every year oil producers flare and vent gas equivalent to the combined gas consumption of Central and South America, indicating that Africa flares and vents gas equivalent to half its power consumption.

Nigeria is currently the 6th leading oil producer and exporter in the world. At the same time gas flaring is not new, but the non-chalant in tackling it headlong had created untold hardship on the people, which had not only had an adverse effect on the economy, but had also lingered for many years. However, apart from the facts as adduced from the inquiry above, it is also evidence that the economic benefits of these natural resources have not in any way been properly shared with most of the large indigenous populations, thereby aggravating tensions and provocations of aggressiveness at any slightest disagreement. And, for the past 40 years, oil and gas exploration, drilling and pipelines laying have also caused a series of environmental and health problems. The government, the

organized private sector, and all the stakeholders in the oil and gas industry with the aid of their foreign counterparts have not cooperatively measure up to expectation as profit is the only thing prime in their minds. To some extent, they have not seen reasons in having a joint bond to making more effort in the promotion of even utilization of liquefied natural gas in factories, medium scale industries and create other avenues that will lead to the optimum stoppage of gas flaring in Nigeria.

The advent of the new technical options shows that it is indeed possible for such continuous flaring to cease. Solution to stop gas flaring in Nigeria might have informed the establishment of a liquefied natural gas plant at Bonny in Rivers State by the federal government and the multi-transnational (MNC) oil and gas corporations operating in the country in order to promote the export of natural gas, utilization and to discourage zero gas flaring but due to lapses and inconsistency the plant had not been adequately utilized. This investigation is of the view that if this is properly attended to with the wasted gases duly collected, that the Nigerian economy might be strengthened.

Other than flaring, there are in principle three alternative routes for the management of associated gas resources, in terms that the gas can be:

(i) Re-injected into the reservoir to maintain pressure and enhanced oil recovery (EOR) or stored in underground formations;

- (ii) Used for energy purposes on the production facility or nearby facilities;
- (iii) Collected, cleaned and sold.

To reduce this practice also, the governments need to develop and enforce an appropriate legal and regulatory framework. They need to reform the gas market, getting rid of subsidies for competing fuels and making room for private operators to develop gas infrastructure. And they need to avoid tax and royalty systems that discourage operators from using the gas associated with oil production.

In the same process, the government and the oil companies should equally removal all barriers and attend to the problems of the host communities that had been greatly affected by the oil business so as to encourage and creating enabling environment for all parties to oil explorations and production in the Niger Delta.

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