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Niger-delta: Context, Issues, Actors and Dynamics

The Niger-delta: Definition

Two key factors influence the conception of Niger-delta within the context of Nigerian politics. The first is geography. The Niger-delta comprises the coastal low lands and water-marshlands, creeks, tributaries and lagoons of the southernmost ends of Nigeria that drain the Niger River into the Atlantic at the Bight of Biafra (Ibeanu 2000). At its core are the littoral states of Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers States of the south-south geopolitical zone of the country, and the riverine parts of Ondo State, which is home to over forty minority ethnic groups, including the Ijaws, Urhobos, Itshekiris, Efiks, Ibibios, Ogonis, Ilajes, Kalabaris, Ikweres, Isokos and Ndokwas.

The second is political, the main indicator of which is the presence of crude oil 'whose exploitation has multiplied the environmental and developmental problems of the various Niger-delta communities' (Osaghae 2006) has become the most critical factor in the definition of the Niger-delta. The tendency is now to regard the oil-bearing states, which mostly belong to the south-south (minorities) geopolitical zone as constituting the Niger-delta. As used here, Niger-delta refers to 'Calabar-Ogoja Rivers and present-day Delta State axis' which as pointed out by Osaghae 'remains the hub of what emerged as distinctive Niger-delta politics'. It is such that the core Niger-delta continues to be distinguished by 'Deltans' from the wider geopolitical region, whether of minorities (south-south) or oil-bearing areas. The difficult terrain of Niger-delta has over time been used to justify the under development of the region. In other words, it is argued:

although the area had what should have been something of a headstart in being one of the earliest parts of the country to have contact with Europeans and forces of westernisation, its terrain constituted a major obstacle to development (Osaghae 2006).

The obstacle that terrain constitutes was acknowledged by the Willink Commission (appointed by the colonial government to enquire into the fears of minorities and the means for allaying them), which recommended the establishment of a special board, the Niger-delta Development Board, to address the particular problems of the region.

But Niger-deltans argue that though the difficult terrain argument has some validity, it is ruse. In other words, for Niger-deltans, the region's underdevelopment is political – not geographical – because Lagos, the former federal capital has an equally difficult terrain and sits mainly on land reclaimed from the sea but it has modern and well developed infrastructure. Similarly, 'many arid and desert parts of the country have been transformed into modern habitations'. Thus, for Niger-deltans, the underdevelopment of their region is the consequence of deliberate policies of discrimination; deprivation and criminal neglect that minority groups in general have suffered from in the country. In other words, Niger-deltans see their present predicament as resulting from direct violation of their fundamental human rights by the Nigerian state.

It is such claims of human rights violation that lie at the heart of Niger-delta demands, which focus on equity and justice in state-Niger-delta relations. Allegations and perceptions of discrimination, exclusion, oppression, injustice, domination and exploitation, which Niger-deltans claim arise from denials and violations of their human rights, have proved indispensable to the emergence and sustenance of their various contentious collective actions since independence.

Self Determination and Resource Control

There are two central issues and, in fact, ideological basis of the Niger-delta struggle. The first – self determination – refers to the choice of a nationality to live in its own way, determine its own political fate, preserve its own affairs and develop itself or even democratise as it may deem fit. (Okwu-Okafor 1994:89).¹ In a sense, it refers to the right or freedom of a people that are subordinated, oppressed, dominated, colonised or even marginalised to assert and constitute itself into a separate state. This right is guaranteed by the United Nations Charter and the African Charter on Human Rights, to all cultural, religious and linguistic minorities and peoples as part of the human strive for liberation.

Self determination connotes the desire of a people for self existence, self management, self development and sovereignty over resources. This, in one word, is autonomy. Self determination does not necessarily mean separate and independent existence. Its end may be, at least for a while, the desire for cultural autonomy, ethnic rights and justice, political representation and inclusion, development and resource flow and participation in their own development.

Whatever its meaning and extent, the right or freedom to self determination has driven numerous peoples all over the world, to mobilise, solidarise and build nationalism, and to organise resistance through popular movements and institu-

tions of violence. Self determination struggles have been fierce and violent and have several times manifested in inter-ethnic, religious and regional conflicts, as well as rebellions and civil wars.

The issue of self determination has arisen in Nigeria, first out of ethnic deprivation, exclusion, exploitation, discrimination and disadvantage, particularly in relation to resource contribution and distribution, political representation and developmental attention.

It dates back to the First Republic when minority groups were marginalised by the ethnic majorities in each of the regions. The struggle for the ethnic collective or minority rights and ensuing ethnic nationalism and mobilisation which began in the 1960s, and then resurged in the 1990s. The second issue in the discourse of self determination in Nigeria is the ascendancy of the national question, which relates to questions and demands as to the existence, shape and sustainability of the Nigerian nation. This first emerged in the 1960s and has resurged since the 1990s in the Niger-delta region.

Self determination struggles in the Niger-delta has taken two forms. The first is what Osaghae has called 'Accommodation Seeking Nationalism', that is demands for autonomy, for separate or 'own' states and local governments within the Nigerian state as solution to the problems of minorities or powerlessness, the process and condition of deprivation and exclusion from the benefits and rewards of society that has characterised their existence within the Nigerian state. Accommodation Seeking Nationalism is largely peaceful and non-violent in approach, involving the use of negotiation and bargaining and constitutional mechanisms.

The second (and current form) is 'Self-determination Nationalism or Resource Control Nationalism'. Resource control nationalism is characterised by violence due to the widely varying conception of resource control held by the various actors in Niger-delta and the difficulty in reconciling such conceptions. Resources, to the communities and peoples of the Niger-delta, is not just 'oil and gas' but include land, forests and water.

Control, for Niger-delta communities, means 'ownership and control' of all resources which signify the freedom to willingly dispose of these resources, to negotiate its alienation or extraction without reference to a violent and/or an undemocratic state.

The Ogoni struggle was the first ethnic assertion or claim to self determination within the Niger-delta region. The Ogoni struggle was a struggle for physical existence, environmental justice, resources control, political participation, self rule and political autonomy. The Ijaws followed suit by the mid-1990s, by seeking political restructuring that guarantees the Ijaws self rule, resource control, self development and regional autonomy within a true federal framework. In the Kaiama Declaration, the Ijaw youths expressly sought self determination, self government and resource control and justice within a Nigeria that should be restructured through a sovereign national conference of ethnic nationalities.

The second ideological basis of the youth struggle is Resource Control. Briefly put, the concept of resource control that is dominant in the Niger-delta has three main components: (a) the power and right of a community to raise funds by way of tax on persons, matters, services and materials within its territory; (b) the executive right to the ownership and control of resources, both natural and those created within its territory; and (c) the right to customs duties on goods destined for its territory and excise duties on goods manufactured in its territories. Thus for communities of the Niger-delta, resource control signifies a change in the demands of Niger-delta community from fairer sharing to total control of the natural resources found in a state by the state for use in its development at its own pace. For its proponents, resource control as conceived above is about self-determination and group survival and so not negotiable because resource control is essential for the survival of the South-South peoples and is a *sine qua non* to the continued existence of the people of the area in the Nigerian federation.

The most articulate presentation of Niger-deltans conception of 'resource control' today can be found in the Kaiama Declaration of the Ijaw people proclaimed on the 11th of December 1998.

The Kaiama Declaration, coined, sharpened and popularised the term 'resource control' and set the tone for the present debate on the matter. Article 1 of the Declaration asserts that ownership of 'all land and natural resources within the Ijaw territory as belonging to the Ijaw communities' because they are 'the basis of our survival'. Article 2 insists on the 'peoples and communities right to ownership and control of our lives and resources' while Article 4 advises all oil companies and staff operating in the Ijaw area to withdraw from Ijaw land, pending the resolution of the issues of resource ownership and control in the Ijaw area of the Niger-delta.

Two other principal actors in the politics of Niger-delta, the Multi-national Oils Companies (MNCs) and the Nigerian state do not share Niger-deltans' conception of resource control. The MNCs believe that resource control agitation by the people of the Niger-delta is merely a clamour for a return of parts of oil and logging revenue into the region. They see it as an exercise in fiscal federalism and not necessarily a change in status quo as they believe that once the states have been 'settled', there will be peace. To the Federal Government, resource control advocacy and its meaning is a call for war or a break-up of Nigeria. Government leaders believe that an agitation for control of resources is nothing but 'separatist tendencies' that must not be tolerated, but crushed.

The Niger-delta struggle, from the above analysis, is thus an exercise in contentious collective action aimed at ending discrimination, exclusion, oppression, injustice, domination and exploitation which Niger-deltans claim arise from denials and violations of their human rights by the Nigerian state.

Such contentious collective action is pursued by resistance movements [which] emerge with an ideology based on the principle of self-determination as a driving force for ethnic autonomy.

Such movements were the expressed actions undertaken by the various ethnic nationalities to make their formal declarations and issuance of bill of rights in demand for freedom, access to basic needs and resources, protection from environmental pollution and equal participation in the polity.

Stages in Niger-delta Contentious Collective Action

Contentious political action in the Niger-delta can be understood by focusing on the activities of the principal actors involved in the struggle. Niger-delta self-determination struggles have been pursued by two sets of actors – the Elders/Elites and the Youths. The elders/elites are the businessmen, retired civil servants, traditional leaders and political leaders in the Niger-delta. They dominate the political, economic and traditional power structures of the region. Their prominence flows from their role as intermediaries between the ordinary people of the region and the state/multinational corporations exploiting the oil reserves of the region.

Through their role as intermediaries they are able to build-up great prestige and wealth with which they have established region-wide client networks. The Niger-delta elite provides a classic example of the phenomenon of ‘straddling’, with one and the same person simultaneously occupying the key posts in political, economic and traditional spheres of public life in the Niger-delta, making the average Niger-delta elite a very powerful person.

The elite in the Niger-delta generally adopt a peaceful, non-violent approach that involves the use of negotiation and bargaining with key stakeholders such as the state and multi-national corporations operating in the Niger-delta.

Elites have generally pursued their demands through two types of movements: (a) socio-political movements; and (b) ethno-cultural movements. Socio-political movements have related to the region’s struggle from the advocacy, influence, opinion and political engineering planks.

They have constructed numerous platforms for concerted regional action, which from the early 1990s have included minority nationalism, regional autonomy, federal restructuring, resource control, ethnic and minority rights and equity and political representation.

The central grievance of these groups is neglect and marginalisation in terms of political representation and developmental attention, deprivation and disinheritance arising from poor benefits from the oil economy and, more specifically, the decline in the proportion of derivation-based allocation from the federation account. Usually, these groups are pan-ethnic and region-wide and comprise the very top crop of the region’s elite.

Though numerous groups existed from the 1950s, more recent groups have emerged, beginning from the 1990s. These include the Organisation for the Restoration of Actual Rights of Oil Communities, Southern Minorities Forum,

Ethnic Minority Rights Organisation of Nigeria, Conference of Traditional Rulers of Oil Producing States, Association of Minority Oil States, Niger Delta Peace and Development Forum, Movement for the Protection and Survival of Oil Mineral and Natural Gas Producing Communities of Nigeria, Niger Delta Professionals, Niger Delta Patriots, South-South Empowerment Forum, South-South Peoples Assembly, South-South Peoples Conference, South-South Peoples Forum and the Union of Niger Delta (Ikelegbe 2005a). Older ethno-cultural movements are Niger-delta community and ethnic groups that have since the colonial era been a basis of mobilisation and organisation for community and ethnic development, politics and group interests.

Since the exacerbation of the Niger-delta condition, and with the deepening economic crisis, the decline in the benefits from the oil economy and increasing sense of neglect and marginalisation, the growing disenchantment and social restiveness have found expression through these groupings. As a result, the community and ethnic associational fabric has become stronger, proliferated and more cohesive, and has a major formation for articulating and constructing claims and responding to the oil economy.

The major grievances of this segment are the absence of development, indicated mainly in poor social amenities and infrastructures, the poor participation in the oil economy (indicated in poor employment and poor patronage in contracts and services of their indigenes) and the poor benefits from the oil boom, particularly low sharing of oil-based revenues, and poor corporate social responsibility of the MNCs. Arising from these, the groups have been raising issues of environmental degradation and remediation, compensation and reparation, stakeholding in the oil economy, increased developmental attention from the Nigerian state and the MNCs, and increased representation, particularly at the level of top officials and ministers of petroleum and the presidency.

The prominent groupings of this segment include the Movement for the Survival of *Ogoni* People, the *Egbema* National Congress, Movement for the Reparation of *Ogbia*, the *Urhobo* Political Stakeholders Forum, Movement for the Survival and Advancement of *Ekpeye* Ethnic Nationality, *Orom* National Forum, Old *Aboada* Joint Consultative Forum, *Egi* Ethnic Coalition, the *Ijaw* Elders Forum, *Elimotu* Movement, *Isoko* Community Oil Producing Forum, *Ijaw* National Congress, *Isoko* Development Union and *Urhobo* Progress Union (Ikelegbe 2001b, 2005). The elder/elite movements can be described as 'systemic movements'.

Systemic Movements are movements that make demands for certain socio-political changes within the existing political framework. In other words, the movement engages in a form of interest group politics. They have generally advocated, as solution to Niger-delta problems, separate or own states and local governments. Even though elite agitations produced results in the form of creation of more states, from two (Rivers and Cross Rivers) in 1967 to four (Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers) in 1995 and five (Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa

Ibom, Cross Rivers and Delta), such solution has not achieved necessary satisfactory results envisaged 'because of the erosion of the fiscal and jurisdictional powers, and weakened governance capacities of state governments relative to those wielded by the former regions' (Osaghae 2006:10).

The unsatisfactory results of 'separate or own states and local governments' solution has spurred more forceful demands from elites for political solutions that would strengthen the jurisdictional and fiscal capacities of Niger-delta states. Their actions signaled a new phase in the Niger-delta struggle, the elevation of the struggle from purely developmental issues to political ones that include demands such as federal restructuring, Resource control and resolution of the national question through a conference of ethnic nationalities.

A good example of such movement is the Southern Minorities Movement (SMM) which was founded at Eku in Delta State in February 1994. The movement submitted a memorandum to the Abacha regime's 1994/95 Constitutional Conference, demanding a minimum of 50 per cent derivation formula and the creation of six political zones, including one for the Niger-delta, with substantial devolution of powers to the zones.

The actions of SMM and similar organisations such as the Movement for the Survival of *Ogoni* People (MOSOP) drew great support from within and outside the Niger-delta and heightened the tempo of mobilisation within the region, with youths willingly engaging in the activities of the movements. The success of the movements, as expressed in the approval of the six zone formula and increased international scrutiny of the activities of oil companies in Niger-delta, resulted in a campaign by the Abacha government to suppress such Niger-delta agitations which were considered to be a threat to the security of the Nigerian state. The campaigns of repression gave birth to the phase of youth domination of the Niger-delta struggle.

From Contention to Violence: Youths and Niger-delta Struggle

As earlier mentioned, youth involvement in the Niger-delta struggle took a decisive turn with the repression suffered in the hands of the Abacha regime that turned Niger-delta communities into garrison enclaves, patrolled by the Nigerian military. Youth movements began to gain prominence from the mid-1990s when the youths, exasperated by unemployment, growing impoverishment and immiseration, inconsistent and poor transition programmes, poor human rights and economic reform policies and the annulment of the 1993 presidential election results, began to translate their frustration, anger and hostility into actions against the Nigerian state, the MNCs and their elite and elders. The youths regarded the latter as weak, fearful and ineffective in seeking access, dialogue and agreements with an insensitive and repressive state and exploitative and socially irresponsible MNCs. The youths decided to take their destinies in their hands by mobilising, organising and engaging the state and MNCs (Ikelegbe 2005b).

Though youths had not been passive participants in the Niger-delta struggle (as they have been active participants in the forceful actions and demands of groups such as MOSOP) they were more of foot soldiers with the elite calling the shots. It took the severe repression suffered under the Abacha regime for them to be transformed into the vanguard of the Niger-delta struggle.

The youths took centre-stage with the Kaiama Declaration of December 11 1998, which among other demands had given oil companies operating in the Niger-delta two weeks to pay compensation for destroying the environment and to prevent the collapse of social infrastructure. The youths also raised political questions about the allocation of fiscal revenue in areas other than where it was derived, and about decentralisation and devolution of power on local community. They also called for an overhaul of Nigeria's federal system.

The expiration of the two-week deadline led to youths nicknamed 'Egbesu Boys' marching peacefully to Government House in Yenagoa, capital of Bayelsa State where they were shot upon by the police, leaving several dead. The youths reconvened in the evening and systematically raided military checkpoints and police, seizing weapons and ammunition. The actions of the youths spread rapidly, spurring copy, as youths from Odi ransacked their town's police station and proceeded to Yenagoa to join the Egbesu Boys.

Communities which were 'traditionally' less hostile towards oil companies and the state suddenly became more belligerent. For example, the Supreme Council of Eket Youths embarked on a major protest, the first of such protest in the thirty years of Mobil's presence in the town. The actions of the youths drew inspiration from the Twelve Day Revolution of the Niger-delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) between late February and early March 1966. The armed revolt, led by Isaac Adaka Boro, was predicated on the brazen oppression of the minority Ijaws in the then eastern region of Nigeria, specifically in the form of the underdevelopment of the region. The more immediate factors however was the coup d'etat led by those the Ijaws considered to be regional oppressors against a northern leadership seen to be an ally of the Niger-delta in the quest for an autonomous region.

The NDVS began operation on 23rd February 1966 by declaring a Niger-delta republic, comprising the Ijaw area and territorial waters. The declaration further demanded the cancellation of all crude oil related agreements and directed the oil companies to stop exploration (Boro 1982:118-123). The NDVS took over Kaiama, Yenagoa, Imbiama, Oloibiri, Nembe, Patani, Odi, Sagbama and numerous other communities and closed oil installations and pipelines. After encounters with federal troops, the NDVS were arrested, tried for treason, convicted and sentenced to death in June 1966, but released from jail in August 1967. The December 11 declaration of Niger-delta youths took place in Kaiama, the hometown of Isaac Boro, and was a conscious attempt to invoke the spirit

of the Twelve Day Revolution, which can be seen as the historic antecedent of present youth militancy in Niger-delta in two broad ways:

- i) Generally, it signified the beginning of a more sharply focused and narrowly defined Niger-delta identity and consciousness that is centred on the present Rivers-Bayelsa-Delta States axis. The revolution also showed clearly that it was dangerous to ignore the situation in the Niger-delta or continue to take it for granted.
- ii) Specifically, it marked the beginning of a generational shift in the Niger-delta struggle, as politicised, frustrated and impatient youths took over the scene from the older elites who they sometimes accused of 'selling out' to the oppressors.

More important for youth-dominated mobilisations are the following features of the 12 day revolution:

- a. The uprising was spearheaded by a core of educated youths such as Isaac Adaka Boro, Samuel Owonaru and Nottingham Dick;
- b. The NDVS recruited volunteer youths aged 18-30 years from the Ijaw areas in the mid-west and eastern regions;
- c. The youths were camped in the creeks and trained in guerrilla warfare.
- d. The NDVS was armed with light automatic rifles, revolvers and pistols, mines and improvised grenades. They also utilised speed-boats.
- (e) The NDVS was organised with rankings, commands and divisions
- (f) The objective of the uprising was the nationalist struggle to 'break' the Niger-delta area into a nation and strive to maintain it (Boro 1982:96).

In other words, the features of the Boro revolution act as the template for present Niger-delta youth militants and militias as expressed in the Kaiama Declaration of December 11, 1998 whose Articles 4 and 5 established the vanguard role of the youths in Niger-delta collective contentious rights action. Article 4 states that 'Ijaw youths in all the communities in all Ijaw clans in the Niger Delta will take steps to implement these resolutions beginning from the 30th of December 1998, as a step towards reclaiming the control of our lives'; while Article 5 of the declaration promises that 'Ijaw youths and peoples will promote the principle of peaceful coexistence between all Ijaw communities and with our immediate neighbours, despite the provocative and divisive actions of the Nigerian state, transnational oil companies and their contractors.... We affirm our commitment to joint struggle with the other ethnic nationalities in the Niger-delta area for self-determination'.

Ideological Basis of the Youth Struggle

The youth have been raising critical questions about the Nigeria State project; its equitability of rights and privileges and access to power, and resources.

In raising these questions, three issues have come to the fore. The first is ethnicism and regionalism. In the conception of the youth activities, Nigeria is made up of nationalities which are essentially ethnic groups and it is the relations between these groups that have disadvantaged the minority ethnic groups. Secondly, the Niger-delta, or politically the South-South, regarded as a geo-political region within a competitive regional framework, which comprises of minorities (though oil bearing), has been neglected and marginalised. There are two minority issues here: first, that of the minority ethnic groups of the region, and second, the oil rich region comprising of minorities. Both have been disadvantaged within the Nigeria state project. At both levels, ethnic and region, the Niger-delta struggle has built a nationalism, or shared sentiment and aspirations about marginality and oppression. It has strengthened the ethnic and regional identity by creating a sense of common conditions and causes, and particularly, a sense of common siege, threat, mistreatment and misfortune, occasioned by state responses and the nature of state and corporate governance.

The heightening ethnic nationalism has created a new generation of ethnic men, proud of their groups and willing to fight against their mistreatment, oppression and marginalisation. It is the new generation of ethnic men that constitute the pool of ethnic militias, militants and activists. Ethnic nationalism is a key element in the Niger-delta struggle and, in fact, a binding block for regionalism and the struggle against the Nigeria state project. It is from the ethnic platform that strong networks and platforms for regional cooperation and activism have flowed. Among ethnic leaders, political leaders, business and opinion leaders, a strong Niger-delta platform for agitation and action has emerged since the early 1990s.

On the issue of nationality, the youths question the Nigeria state project, on the basis of under-representation of their ethnic groups and region (in political and administrative terms), insignificant share of national resources and even of the region's oil revenues, and insignificant development attention. In particular, the youths question the concept of 'Nigeria state' and the use to which it has been put in relation to the Niger-delta. The youths believe that it is the form that has enabled the use to which it has been put. Of major concern is the nature of federalism, which has been progressively restructured in favour of central power and resources; a centre that has been hijacked, dominated and utilised to appropriate the resources and rights of the minorities and the Niger-delta by the ethnic hegemony – Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo.

Ethnic nationalism among the Ogonis, Ijaws, Itsekiris, Ogbas and others have been constructed against the background of exploitation, deprivation, injustice, unfair treatment, impoverishment by both the Nigerian state and the multinational oil companies. It has been particularly constructed on a siege mentality in

which a fierce, oppressive and destructive security machine, deployed by the Nigerian state and MNOCs, has been left loose like a leviathan to annihilate or exterminate them. Therefore, the new nationalism is about survival, resistance and redress.

Another main issue is the restructuring of the Nigerian state in ways that guarantee ethnic and regional autonomy, self rule, self development, resource control, fair treatment and equitable representation. These conceptions and the ensuring socio-political constructions are important for understanding the nature, character and dynamics of the Niger-delta conflicts. The ethnic and regional formulation of the national question, the Nigerian problem and the construction of ethnic and regional nationalism as a platform for struggle, and resistance and action against the Nigeria state, all provide a prism for viewing the development of ethnic militias for fighting ethnic and regional grievances and causes. For example, the militants are in a sense ethnic nationalists, as the Ijaw militants engage in a struggle for freedom and justice, not for themselves, but for their people. According to Dokubo-Asari, an Ijaw militia is 'neither a politician nor a militants, but an Ijaw nationalist' (*Daily Independent* 18 June 2007). He says of himself:

I will continue on these issues of self determination, sovereign national conference and the right of our people to take that which belongs to them. I am fighting for self determination for my people (Obia 2007:A11).

The core issues are local autonomy, true federalism and resource control.

Conflicts in the Niger-delta

Three types of conflicts can be identified. These are conflicts between the Federal Government and the communities; between communities and the oil companies, and within and between the communities themselves:

1. Federal Government–Community Conflicts: These conflicts take two forms. The first involves the Niger-delta as a whole, by itself and/or in informal alliance with other ethno-political groupings, taking on the Federal Government for its laws and policies on oil exploration, production and revenue distribution. These conflicts are engendered by the fear of minorities regarding the domination by the larger ethnic groups and exacerbated by disagreement, first over resource allocation and later over resource control and restructuring of the polity. Presently, the most important of these conflicts are those over resource control.

The second form of Federal Government–Niger-delta Conflict is that involving the Federal Government and specific local communities which engage the former over its misuse and abuse of force in protecting its own and oil companies' interests in the Niger-delta. The prime example of such conflict is that involving MOSOP and the Federal Government.

2. **Community–Oil Company Conflicts:** These arise out of disagreements between local communities and oil companies over issues of compensation for extraction of oil and attendant degradation of the Niger-delta environment. Host communities claim that the activities of the multinational oil companies have negative impacts for which compensations and other benefits must be paid. Multi-national companies on the other hand either deny such negative impacts or dispute the nature of the level of compensation to be made. Examples of such conflicts include those of Umuechem vs. SDPC (1990), Ijaw vs. Chevron (December 2000), Elelenwo vs. Shell (2000), and Agalabiri & Abadiorma vs. SPDC (July 2000).
3. **Inter and Intra-community Conflicts:** Intra- and inter-community conflicts are struggles within and between communities for control of benefits that accrue from having oil on one's land or territory. These are basically struggles over control of territory/land where oil pipes and oil wells are located. Examples include the Ogbogoro War (1998), the Obeakpu [Oyigbo] Conflict (1999), the Bille-Ke Conflict (2000), the Nembe War (2000) and the Olomoro-Oleh Conflict (2000).