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DEMOCRACY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN THE NIGER DELTA

Ignatius Sunday Ume, PhD
Department of Sociology& Intelligence and Security Studies,
Novena University, Ogume, Delta State, Nigeria

&

, Chukwu, Christian Chima
Department of Sociology& Intelligence and Security Studies,
Novena University, Ogume, Delta State, Nigeria

Abstract

After 59 years of independence, and twenty years of uninterrupted civilian rule, Nigerians expected the principles of democracy and sustainable development to have been assimilated, particularly in the Niger Delta, but the optimism has unfortunately been misplaced due to bad governance that has 'over consumption' of natural resources as its cardinal focus. As a result, this paper examines democracy and sustainable development underscoring the challenges and prospects in the Niger delta, and observing that democracy is at the defining moment in Nigeria. As worrisome as it is, the objectives are to: (i) examine why Nigeria as a country with large deposits of oil and other natural resources cannot maximize her potential for poverty reduction and human development. (ii) authenticate the extent to which democracy in Nigeria can guarantee sustainable development and (iii) recommend ways of making Nigeria's democracy, invariably lead to sustainable development. The theoretical framework for the study is the Social Conflict Theory. The paper adopts the descriptive and exploratory research designs for reason that this research style is concerned primarily with a qualitative study. The paper reveals that Nigeria's brand of democracy -- capitalist democracy, rather than been a blessing is a curse to reducing poverty reduction and improving human development. Furthermore, the paper submits that in the twenty years of uninterrupted democratic rule, a minor relationship between democracy and sustainable development as observed in the federal government sponsored Amnesty programme that has improved the living standards of the people of Niger Delta. Aside this, the paper, to a large extent, agrees with other previous findings that, though democracy is important, it is not a prerequisite for sustainable development. Based on this, the paper concludes that the domestication of democracy to suit the people cultural orientation will depen democratic principles and ensure the attainment of sustainable development faster than expected. Finally, the paper recommends strict adherent to the principles of democracy and good governance in order to trigger off sustainable development, particularly in the Niger Delta region

Keywords: Democracy; Development; Sustainable development; Amnesty programme;
Capitalist democracy;

1. Introduction

The resounding wind of the return of democracy twenty years ago after sixteen years of military dictatorship was widely celebrated, and expected to usher in sustainable development after 59 years of political independence, but the philosophy of *"overconsumption"* has blighted all genuine efforts at deepening democratic principles and attaining sustainable development. This is particularly a reality in the Niger Delta, despite the fact the region is blessed with large deposits of oil and other natural resources. Most literature focuses on good governance being the panacea for deepening democratic principles and attaining sustainable development, but Nigerian elites have sacrificed principles of good governance (transparency, accountability, responsiveness, participation and effectiveness) for initiating sustainable development on the altar of short-term interest, thus compounding the problem. As a result, the abundant oil and gas deposits which, ought to have been a blessing to the region has not only become a nuisance to the average individual therein, but led to disastrous ecological degradation and environmental pollution in the area. By implication, the inability to depen democratic principles and attain the objective of sustainable development which, is to meet the needs of today, without compromising the needs of tomorrow has become a fantasy.

The population of Niger delta region occupies 7.5% of the total land area of Nigeria, 70,000km^2, and is home to approximately 40 million people comprising of several minority groups, and is Nigeria's oil and gas belt, and host to the nation's crude oil and gas reserves. According to Ikelegbebe (2014), it is also Africa's largest wetland with extensive lowlands, swamp, estuaries, creeks and rivers. But despite the enormous contributions of the Niger Delta region to the wealth of Nigeria, the people of the Niger Delta remain impoverished and underdeveloped. With democracy, the quest for sustainable development, argues Kuku(2012), was supposed to have taken the frontburner since the region is plagued by development neglect, trickle natural resource benefits and marginality in the oil economy, but the region has remained grossly underdeveloped, pauperized, marginalized and largely a poverty zone. The basic facilities and infrastructure of a modern society, like potable water, electricity, health care facilities, good roads, cottage industries and employment are lacking in the area. This is simply the paradox and apparent tragedy of poverty in the midst of wealth. Kuku (2012) aptly agrees that oil and gas infrastructure has led to extensive environmental degradation, destruction of livelihood source, socio-economic disruptions and extensive poverty.

The submission by Kuku is in agreement with the fact that since the discovery of oil in 1956 in Oloibiri, the overwhelming majority of the citizens see the discovery of oil as a curse. Disastrous ecological degradation and environmental pollution coupled with the utter neglect by the oil companies, have contributed to impoverish the people more than ever before. On the other hand, those who have been at the helm of affairs in the oil industry over the years, view the discovery of oil as a blessing, notwithstanding the reality that the ecosystems of the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta have been destroyed by the phenomenon of oil spillage (Mba, 2001 (a). Flooding has become a cyclic natural disaster, which affects sections of the lower Niger and

Benue Rivers and especially the fresh water hydrological zones of the Niger Delta regions of the country. Apart from the submergence and subsequent destruction of agricultural products, the effects of the floods also include the submergence and destruction of buildings and other property. The fatal consequences are evidenced in farmland affected by acid rain thus affecting crop yield and the health of indigenes of the community. It is in line with this that Usen (1995) referred to Iko, a village in Akwa Ibom an oil producing community as a wretched oil rich village which is a reporter's nightmare but the oil man's goldmine. According to him, the continued oil exploitation without caution has not only adversely affected the agricultural and fishing communities of the people negatively, but rendered them poorer now than before. Usen's mind-set is sequel to the thoughtlessness given to the environment by Shell, Mobil, Chevron and other oil multinational giants' corporations polluting and degrading the environment with frequent oil spills and uninterrupted gas flaring that have become endemic and extremely vicious. The most disconcerting thing about the steady degradation of the environment against the drive for sustainable development is that substantial parts of the land have been gobbled up by pipelines laid on the earth surfaces as in Ogoni communities prior to the shutting down of Shell exploration and exploitation. By implication, no sustainable development is achievable as aquatic vegetation that provided a life support system has largely disappeared. The destruction of the aquatic culture and much of the limited farmland through oil spillage has caused grave economic distress. The most conspicuous aspect of life in contemporary Nigeria, particularly in Niger Delta communities remains poverty, malnutrition and disease coupled with the release of million tons of carbon dioxide into the air causing heart and lung related diseases despite having had twenty years of twenty years of uninterrupted democratic rule

Exploring into the concept of 'sustainability', Wikipedia defines it as "a systematic concept, relating to the continuity of economic, social, institutional and environmental aspects of human society, as well as non-human environment. By implication, it is intended to be a means of configuring civilization and human activity so that society, its members and its economies are able to meet their needs and express their greatest potential in the present, while preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems and planning and acting for the ability to maintain these ideals in a very long term (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki). Despite the implication, environmental degradation in the Niger Delta is intimately tied to the birth and development of the country's oil industry. Oil spills, gas flaring and deforestation are the main environmental challenges faced by the region. The consequences of oil spills, deforestation and gas flaring, and in recent years sabotage are felt across the entire Delta region; however, the most severe effects tend to be experienced by those who are already economically and politically marginalized. A World Bank study of the linkages between poverty and the environment in Nigeria found that the poorest half of households surveyed in the Niger Delta obtains 60% of their income from environmental resources. If crop income is included in this category, environmental income constitutes 100 percent of household income. The main implications of this unsustainable dependence are twofold, namely, environmental degradation has a greater impact on the poor than on the rich,

and secondly, the Niger Delta region has a high vulnerability to poverty, because of the high proportion of the population dependent on only limited income resource.

2. Statement of the problem

Despite the overwhelming evidence of about 90% of the oilfields in Nigeria presently located in the Niger Delta, and oil exploitation there having had fatal consequences as evidenced in farmlands(acid rain), and contributing to high health hazard as a result of the release of million tons of carbon dioxide into the air leading to impaired lungs and an estimated 20 million impoverished people contending with corroded roofs as perpetrators smile back with profits in billions of dollars, intervention strategies by non-state actors and many other keen stakeholders to highlight the essence of sustainable development especially in the Niger Delta. Over 500 separate incidents of oil spillage resulting from serious blowouts and other incidents have been recorded in the last decade. Apart from the oil spillage constituting a danger to biotic life in the spillage areas, agricultural land and beaches have become unusable. The ecosystems of the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta have been destroyed by the phenomenon of oil spillage. Flooding is a cyclic natural disaster, which affects sections of the lower Niger and Benue Rivers and especially the fresh water hydrological zones of the Niger Delta regions of the country. The effects of the floods include the submergence and subsequent destruction of agricultural products, the submergence and destruction of buildings and other property. Almost seventy five percent (75%) of gas produced in Nigeria is flared routinely on daily basis. The environmental problems associated with gas flaring include the following major ones: flare radiation is generally high in gas flaring areas of the oil producing areas or communities: rise in temperature in the gas flaring areas: decrease in crop yields. In the event of these, sustainable development, whether democracy or not, will continue to be a mirage.

3. Statement of the Objectives

The primary objective of this paper is to examine the relationship between democracy and sustainable national development in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region and consequently examine the relationship. The specific objectives are to:

(i)   Examine the extent to which there is democracy without development in Niger Delta.
(ii)   The study will also identify democracy and good governance in ensuring sustainable development in Niger Delta
(iii)   To analyze the impact of democracy and sustainable development in ensuring the success of amnesty programme in Niger Delta
(iv)   Finally, the study will provide plausible postulations in terms of measures which can be taken by the government in collaboration with other stakeholders to effectively usher in true democracy and sustainable development in Niger Delta.

From the foregoing, the thrust of this paper, from the foregoing, is to examine the concept democracy and sustainable development with a view to understanding whether there is a

relationship between democracy and development; whether democracy as important as it is, is a prerequisite for sustainable development; and also if strict adherent to the principles of democracy and good governance will trigger other positives to emerge, particularly in the Niger Delta region.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Conflict theory propounded by Karl Marx (1818-1883). The theory provides a materialist interpretation of history, a dialectical method of analysis, a critical stance towards existing social arrangements which, advocates a political program of revolution or, at least, reform to enthrone the rights of the proletariats (commoners). Marx argues vociferously, that the materialist view of history starts from the premise that the most important determinant of social life is the work people are doing, especially work that results in provision of the basic necessities of life, food, clothing and shelter (Marx, 1971). Marxist perspectives see power as concentrated in the hands of a minority in society. They maintained that the powerful and the powerless have different interests and that these differences may lead to conflict in society. It is the contention of Marx that power is concentrated in the hands of those who have economic control within a society (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). The theory stresses divisions within society. It is in view of this that Marx maintains that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. In furtherance, Marxists argue that the state serves the dominant classes in society. They see the state as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie. Marxist theories believe that competition over scarce resources is at the heart of all social relationships.

Thus, Marx sees the entrenched economic exploitation leading directly to political oppression, as owners make use of their economic power to gain control of the state power levers, turning them into a servant of bourgeois economic interests. Marx also argues that oppression sometimes takes more subtle forms as religion serves capitalist interests by pacifying the population; intellectuals, paid directly or indirectly by capitalists, spends their careers justifying and rationalizing the existing social and economic schematics while workers are left in the underground of poverty and marginalization to mourn their subjugated class status

While Marx's interpretation of history might seem completely cynical or pessimistic, it seems his ideas not only have a strong resonance to the Nigerian situation, but they pertinently capture the type, character and complexion of democracy practiced in Nigeria where a section of the country that contributes about 90% of natural resources suffers from a flagrant dearth of infrastructure development; a reversal for a massive economic and infrastructure development, justice, equity and fair play in line with the tenets of true federalism should begin to boom. Again, Marx's social conflict theory seems to point to the ownership of the democratic ideology in Nigeria that points to a system of governance that regenerates and perpetuates the interests of the dominant (and bourgeois) class, while uncooperatively refusing to deliver to the citizens and all downtrodden stakeholders, especially in the Niger delta to improve their environment, arrest the prevalence of poverty, unequal access to resources, large youth populations with limited

access to education or jobs, and other socio-political factors which contribute to conflict and instability in the Niger Delta region.

5. Conceptual issues

5.1 Concept of Democracy

In ancient Greece about 2500 years ago, the concept of democracy first emerged as a form of government. In spite of its age, the concept, like most others in the social sciences, lacks a single and universally acceptable definition. However, the root meaning of the compound word dêmokratia and the ideals that are exemplified in philo-democratic writing from the fifth through the fourth century means, *imprimis*, the power of the people: the publicly manifested power of the people to make things happen(Ober, 2007). It is the right or supremacy of the people in the polis to decide upon what they cherish most without any external force twisting their collective choice. In other words, democracy creates room for the institutionalization of the rule of law; the emphasis on the legitimacy of rules; the availability of choices and cherished values (including freedom); and accountability in governance through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote. Writing earlier, Cohen (1971) tenaciously submits democracy is a system of community government in which by and large the members of the community participate or may participate directly or indirectly in making decisions, which affect them. This means that democracy could be seen as any system of government that is rooted in the notion that ultimate authority in the governance of the people rightly belongs to the people; that everyone is entitled to an equitable participation and share in the equal rights; and where equitable social and economic justice are the inalienable rights of individual citizens in the society. This definition brings out the principles of democracy and the core one being the residence of sovereignty with the people.

Generally speaking, democracy is a way of life that involves freedom to make choices about what one does, where one lives, and how one uses one's earnings; the operation of institutions - the home, the church, local, state and federal government; the right of justified property ownership; social justice and fairness; absence of social and class barriers, equality of opportunity; and the solution of common problems through the exercise of the free will of the people (Mbachu, 1990). This assertion by Mbachu is firmly rooted in the notion that ultimate authority in democracy rightly belongs to the people; that everyone is entitled to an equitable participation and share in the equal rights; and where equitable social and economic justice are the inalienable rights of individual citizens in the society.

Concurring with Mbachu, Muhammad (2007) observes that one of the features inherent in democracy as a system of government that has made it popular amongst people is based on the fact that various groups are able to articulate and press home their demands thereby contributing towards public policy making for positive outcomes in society without discrimination. This is basically a pointer to good governance which is composed of the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups can articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences to promote effective governance, including corporate governance, law, and civil society and managing the public sector (Sanusi

and Martadha, 2011). Accommodating as this definition is, some major ingredients of good governance, such as active citizens participation in the policy formulation process, responsive governance, adherence to rule of law, and accountability are highlighted. Essentially, good governance is effective and unbiased, and upholds the rule of law, and ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on open compromise in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heeded in the various processes that lead to decision making over the allocation of resources.

5.2 Concept of Development

The origin of development is widely disputed, but for many writers on this subject, its intellectual roots lie with the European enlightenment of the eighteenth century. In its contemporary guise, development emerged more conspicuously after the Second World War with the creation of the United Nations (UN) and the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and IMF) designed to drive post-war reconstruction and international economic stability.

Sequel to this, development means different things to different people. For some, it means making a better life for all. Azikiwe (1970) opines that development means mental, spiritual and material advancement which is linked to the society. From Azikiwe, Sen (1971) conceives development as "a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes a institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty among a people". He went further to assert that the three core values that should serve as the conceptual basis and practical guidelines of development are life sustenance, self esteem and freedom - the common goals sought by all individuals and societies. In his contribution, Offiong (1980) argues that real development is involving "a structural transformation of the economy, society, polity and culture of the satellite states that permits the self-generating and self-perpetuating use and development of the people's potentials". In defining development qualitatively, Akinpelu (2002) focuses neither on human beings whom he referred to as the target of development processes rather than material accumulations surrounding him nor of the economic progress and growth of any nation state. He conceived development as:

> A process of changing the personality, equipping it with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to conceive, design, and carry out his/her own self-development.

It involves liberating him/her from all inhibitions (social, economic, political and cultural) that prevent him/her from realizing the best potentialities in him/her; enhancing his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes; boosting his/her self confidence, self-reliance, self-pride, and poise to face the world, and of his/her creative potentials and sense of freedom and readiness to participate in any matters involving self and/or the environment. The ultimate of this type of development is "transformation" or "fundamental change of consciousness" – a change that goes to the very root of the personality (Freire & Nyerere in Akinpelu, 2002). In other words, development is a frontal attack on oppressions, poverty and exploitations that are meted out to the people by the dominant classes and their system. This observation by Akinpelu (2002) aptly sees development beyond the individual or people's perception of development and conceived development, whether

economic, political or social, to imply both increase in output and changes in the technical and institutional arrangement by which it is produced. To him, equally, economic development results when "members of a society increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment with the mindset to increase skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing." Corroborating, Sanda cited in Ering (2012) says development is "a transitional process sustaining multi-faceted improvements in human conditions resulting from positive structural and functional changes in the social, economic, political, environmental or ecological as well as techno-scientific spheres of human endeavour". Within the world of historical materialism, Marx states that 'development should be devoid of alienation in the process of interaction" By extension, development should be seen as a creative means of enabling man to conquer and preserve his environment for future needs. Aside from these viewpoints, development also means economic growth (increase in GDP). Under this circumstance, Willis (2005) contends that development is also equated with progress and modernity. In its strong sense, development means using the productive resources of society to improve the living conditions of the poorest people (Peet and Hartwick, 1999).

While agreeing with all definitions advanced, Sen (2008) summarizes the concept to mean "collective activities by any human society directed at reducing the totality of perceived obstacles to a higher standard of living; thus maximizing the quality of lives of its citizens".

In all, Seers' (1969) explanation of development remains evergreen as he links it to eradication of poverty, unemployment and in equality in a society among other variables. In the light of this, he asserts that:

> The questions to ask about country's development are therefore; what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all the three of these have declined from high levels than beyond doubt this has a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if the entire three have, it would be strange to call the result "Development" even if per capita income doubled (Seer, 1969:3)

For Seers, understanding how a country is fairing in these three indices can help us answer the question of how developed a country is. Crucially relevant, Seers (1969) questions are meant to instill into us an understanding how emerging democratic states like Nigeria are tackling the socio-economic and political challenges they face in their bid to attain sustainable development.

5.3 Concept of Sustainable Development

Having known what development, the question then is: what is a sustainable development?

Fundamentally, the idea of sustainable development emerged from numerous environmental movements over the years and was defined in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) in its 1987 seminar report entitled "Our Common Future". The idea of sustaining the earth has proved a powerful metaphor in raising public awareness and focusing on a better environmental stewardship. The Brundtland

Commission's definition of the term was "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations". From the foregoing, the term "sustainable development" was adopted by agenda 8 programme of United Nations, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit (Brazil). In the Summit, a recommendation that all countries should emphasize on sustainable strategies and Agenda 21 specifically endorsed that human beings as centre of concern for sustainable development programmes as a whole should be participatory and people centered approach to ensure proper development planning and implementation as a strategy to lifting people out of poverty.

In agreement with the Brundtland Commission, sustainable development is simply development that remains evergreen and without any negative consequences for the unborn generations. An understanding of this concept may be made clearer using the following analogies: A hypothetical village community in the northern part of the country living in a fertile land of a savanna vegetation belt decided to embark on a rural electrification project. This is with a view to facilitating the industrialization of the area through the establishment of small and medium scale industries there, thereby raising the villagers' financial base or per capita income and also help to improve their standard of living. The villagers themselves managed to raise a fairly reasonable amount of money. They appealed to the Local Government, which immediately came to their aid and the project commenced. Consequently, trees, shrubs and other vegetative plants were cleared within the network of the electrification lines to facilitate the connection of the various houses to the electric lines. Soon the dry season set in and each heavy wind storm sends a strong mass of wind across the village settlements devastating and removing the roofs of buildings and destroying many houses entirely, leaving many homeless. This was made possible because of the absence of windbreaks consequent upon the falling of trees and the clearing of bushes for the electrification network. It is clear that as the above instructive process continues for months and years, it will create more development problems for the future notwithstanding whatever current needs the electrification projects may meet. In that case the electricity project here represents "unsustainable development" as it jeopardizes or compromises the younger generation's ability to meet their homestead, farmland, road network and other related development needs. More rationally comprehensive planning encompassing adequate precautionary measures would have ensured the sustainability of the community's electrification project.

In another direction, a hypothetical oil company in a hypothetical country constructs a number of oil wells and rigs harnessing the off - shore and on - shore crude oil resource potentials of the country. This was designed or intended to provide employment for the people and to increase the people and the government's revenue and per capita income. Meanwhile thousands of peasant farmers and their families were displaced as they lost their homestead, farmlands, economic trees and other means of livelihood to this project. Shortly the consequences of the oil exploration (spillages and gas flaring inclusive) adversely started occurring, affecting fish life, river basin farmlands, farmsteads, tree crops and plantations, hence displacing and dispossessing the inhabitants there. The affected people either die off slowly from

starvation, hardship, and health hazards or become refugees, urban migrants, social misfits, armed robbers, prostitutes, etc. The oil exploration project can therefore not be said to represent sustainable development no matter how many people are gainfully employed there or the amount of revenue the project may earn for the people and the country. Similar national analogies can be drawn from socio - economic problematic results from a main river to create tourist lakes, generation of electricity and irrigation projects among others.

A specific concern is that those who enjoy the fruits of economic development today may be making future generations worse off. To better understand the need for a sustainable development in Nigeria we need not shift our minds away from the Niger Delta environment earlier described on which this sustainable development is premised or envisaged; hence the state of environmental degradation.

However, long before the late 20th century, scholars argued against the need to trade-off environmental sustainability for economic development. Unsustainable use of forests and cropland has led to two salient forms of environmental degradation: deforestation and desertification. These effects of unsustainable land use are not only of pressing concern as independent environmental issues, but are also intimately linked to climate change. In tandem with the Brundtland Commission Report, the two major concepts are noted in the definition of sustainable development:

i   The concept of "needs particularly, the essential needs of the World's poor which maximum priority should be given; and

ii. The concept of limitations imposed by the state of technology and organizations on the ability of the environment to meet present and needs.

The United Nations 2005 World Summit outcome document identified sustainable development tagged "interdependent and mutually reinforcing Pillar of sustainable development. These pillars are economic developing development and environmental protection (2005 World Summit Document). Based on the triple identified pillars, people have argued through such international fora as the United Nations Permanent forum on indigenous sustainable development with culture being the fourth pillar. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001) further explicates the concept by stating that:

> *Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. It becomes one of the roots of development understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. In this vision, cultural diversity is the fourth policy area of sustainable development.*

5.3.1 Pillars of Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development has four components: economic, social (ecology), cultural and political. Nevertheless these are not always compatible. Sustainability requires a rare balance between these four sets of goals. Once social (ecological) sustainability has been achieved, then it

is possible to attain economic sustainability. If this condition is maintained then political stability can be attained. For sustainable development to be meaningful, overconsumption has to be brought under control. Industrial expansion in the present day has to be made within the carrying capacity of the planet. In essence, human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. These four components of sustainable development are succinctly highlighted hereunder:

i **Economic Development**

This is a fundamental factor in the consideration of sustainable development. Economic development is defined as the practices and meanings associated with the production, use and management of resources, where the concept of "resources" is used in the broad sense of it to refer to materials, money, services, staff, or other assets that are transformed to produce benefit and in the process may be consumed or made available. Benefits of resource utilization may include increased wealth, meeting needs or wants, proper functioning of a system, or enhanced wellbeing.

ii. **Social Development**

Within the context of social development, ecology is used as an analytical tool. However, this pillar has been a subject of debate because it has a social dimension. Some researchers have argued that the environment is a combination of nature and culture. Others argue that ecology is a broader concept that at the intersection of the social and the environment is ecology. However, this view allows culture to stand on its own as a pillar of sustainable development.

iii. **Cultural Development**

Culture is a fourth pillar of sustainable development. It is a product of the Agenda 21 for culture and the United Cities and Local Government Executive Bureau which lead the preparation of the policy statement "Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development" passed on 17 November 2010, in the framework of the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders - 3rd World Congress of United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), held in Mexico City. The cited document points to the link between culture and sustainable development through a dual approach of developing a solid cultural policy and Local Governments).

iv. **Political Development**

The Political development is defined as the pillar of practices and meanings associated with fundamental issues of social power as they relate to the organization, authorization, legitimation and regulation of a common social life. This definition is in tandem with the view that political change is a prerequisite for responding to economic, ecological and cultural challenges.

5.3.2 Critique of Sustainable Development

5.3.2.1 Consequences of the Concept

The erstwhile American vice president, John Baden, views the notion of sustainable development as dangerous because the consequences have unquantifiable effects. Thus, he postulates that in economy like in ecology, the inter-dependence rule applies. Isolated actions are impossible. A policy which is not carefully well thought will carry along various perverse and

adverse effects for the ecology as much as for the economy. To save the environment and to promote a model of sustainable development risk, efforts should indeed be made to reverse the effects (Baden, 1992:17). He concludes by arguing that the notion of sustainable development is so vague that politicians can act in disguise of it to project their interest.

5.3.2. 2 Vagueness of the term

Jean - Marc Jancovici writes about sustainable development expressing his opinion of the term by stating thus: I know that this term is obligatory, but I find it also absurd, or rather so vague that it says nothing. Luc Ferry adds that, sustainable development has become obscured by conflicting world views: who would like to be a proponent of an untenable development. (Luc Ferry 2007:75)

5.3.2.3 Basis

Sylvie Brunei, a French geographer questions the basis of the concept of sustainable development. Fundamentally, the core ideas of sustainable development area are hidden form of protectionism by Western countries impeding the development *of* the Third World Countries. Thus, she asserts "I have the feeling that sustainable development is perfectly helping out capitalism."

5. 3. 2. 4. De-growth

The apostles of this school argue that the term sustainable development is a contradiction. According to them, on a planet where 20% of the population consumes 80% of the natural resources, sustainable development cannot be possible for this 20%. Stressing further, they maintain that according to the origin of the concept of sustainable development, a development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs, the right term for the development countries should be a sustainable de-growth (Bruno, 2008:10).

5.3.2.5 Measurability

A report for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2007 stressed the problem of measurability within the context of sustainable development and laments that:

> *While much discussion and effort has gone into sustainability indicators, none of the resulting systems clearly tell us whether our society is sustainable. At best, they can tell us that we are heading in the wrong direction or that our current activities are not sustainable More often, they simply draw our attention to the existence of problems, doing little to tell us the origin of those problems and nothing to tell us how to solve them.*

6. Sustainable Development and the Nigerian Degraded Environment: Specific Issues

Having x-rayed the assessment and consequences of the concept **of** sustainable development, directing our focus on the concept and the Nigerian degraded environment with specific issues is of relevance. As a result, sustainable economic growth which is a subset of development means that real GNP per capita is increasing over time and the increase is not threatened by feedback from either biophysical impacts (pollution, resource problems) or from social impacts (social

disruption). Sustainable development is a socio-economic concept whose content varies according to the culture, time and perspective. It can only be properly understood by adopting an integrative approach involving ecological, social, political and economic considerations. Sustainable development is a conglomerate of these four sectors. As an instance, over-all social development is only sustainable if no deterioration occurs in the medium and long term in the sectors referred to above. Also, the interconnectedness of the four sectors requires that any assessment based on the concept of sustainable development shall include all the interdependencies. Okoye (1999) observed as an instance that ecological stability promotes economic stability, which has positive influence on health and education and this in turn can lower the birth rate, thus reducing the pressure on environment such as land and forests.

Until recently, because of the relatively low level of economic activity and the consequent minimum disturbance to the natural environment, the degree and intensity of environmental hazards in the country has been low. But now the increasing pace of socio - economic activity has brought in its wake the degradation of the environment. The degradation of the physical environment has increased. Five major sources of environmental degradation in Nigeria now discussed are oil spillage, flood and soil erosion,' gas flaring, deforestation and water contamination.

Over 500 separate incidents of oil spillage resulting from serious blowouts and other incidents have been recorded in recent times. For instance, twenty one years ago, precisely in 1998, there was a major oil spillage from the Mobile pipeline linking its Idoho platform with the Qua Iboe terminal. Similarly in the same period, there was another oil spillage at the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Jones Creek oil well. This consequently led to the pollution of water and destruction of both aquatic life and agricultural land of the Izombe communities of farmers and fishermen. In addition, the oil leakage at Jesse in Delta State in which three hundred and seven (307) people were burnt to death cannot be ignored (Ibe, 1998).

Apart from the oil spillage constituting a danger to biotic life in the spillage areas, agricultural land and were rendered beaches unusable. The ecosystems of the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta have been destroyed by the phenomenon of oil spillage (Mba, 2001 (a). Flooding is a cyclic natural disaster, which affects sections of the lower Niger and Benue Rivers and especially the fresh water hydrological zones of the Niger Delta regions of the country. The effects of the floods include the submergence and subsequent destruction of agricultural products, the submergence and destruction of buildings and other property. Almost seventy five percent (75%) of gas produced in Nigeria is flared routinely on daily basis (Obioha, 1998). The environmental problems associated with gas flaring include the following major ones: flare radiation is generally high in gas flaring areas of the oil producing areas or communities: rise in temperature in the gas flaring areas: decrease in crop yields (such as maize, tubers and even flowering and fruiting of palm trees, okro, etc). In addition, fishing in Oguta and Ohaji - Egbema Local Government Areas of Imo State and Ogba - Egbema Ndomi in Bayelsa State has been seriously affected as catches have continued to decline significantly (Okoye, 1999). Some

species of crabs have equally virtually disappeared'. In the face of all the above, sustainable development is therefore impossible.

6.1 Implication on Sustainable Agriculture, Fishing and Environmental Quality

A degraded environment is not sustainable except negatively. What is sustained in the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta is unsustainability. This is not tautology because the delta environment has sustained petroleum exploitation for decades while the individual's economic activity has become unsustained. The individuals' economic activity or means of sustenance has a relationship with resource exploitation. If the individual is the one doing the exploitation, the relationship is exponential as his well-being will increase in exploitation (even if his environment deteriorates proportionally). However, in the Niger Delta, the relationship between resource exploitation and the individual is non-linear, has no reciprocal function nor adjustment mechanisms. That is to say, the individual has not been considered as a variable in the exploitation equation until recently.

The Nigerian Government and the operating oil companies may be partners in a repression trade. The observation being that the companies produce the oil, and split the revenue with the government which uses it to finance urban projects outside the exploitation zone. The Nigeria Government in this sense is helping to under develop itself. Under development is hereby defined as the process of NOT estimating and planning for the adverse future effects of present resource exploitation trends and development efforts. This is very apparent in the Niger Delta area where the inhabitants (individuals) and environment are of less- importance than the resources taken out of it. Observably, the following aspects have become of secondary importance:

(a) Agriculture (Food crop and market garden).
(b) Fishing (Inland and Off-shore).
(c) Environmental Quality (Aquatic, Soil, Air),

The relationship of man to the above aspects is traditional. They imply sustenance. Once separated from them, man becomes violent out of desperation. Separation is due to:

(i) Environment insult (insult as defined in the lexicon). That is the environment is not respected,
(i) Environmental abuse (abuse as defined in the lexicon). That is, treated with violent disrespect,
(ii) Neglect of environmental cost (cost as translated by the trader, in relation to gain).

Once these later three aspects (i - iii) are recognized right from the onset of projects, budgets, loan negotiations, political campaigns and even chieftaincy awards, then the former three aspects (a - c) would be gradually addressed (the damage has been done, however).

Environment without man is a dangerous classification that has cost the Niger Delta its present problems. This concept (of the environment as resources of the earth that man can use

which gives rise to various types of environments e.g. behavioural environment, business environment, school, hospital, social, physical, human environment) has led to the subtle decay of the Niger Delta through oil pollution Alternatively environment including man's concept is natural to man (defined as the totality of his living space, the constituent parts, interactions and relationships with the rest of the environment). Man would not in time of peace purposely destroy where he is living at present only to seek for a new habitat the next day!

Perhaps the solution to a sustainable development of the Niger Delta area lies in an integrated environmental management approach that looks backward into time and culture and progresses forward into, science and technology. A sustainability Science approach is desired which should involve new styles of institutional organization to support interdisciplinary research over the long term. It should involve a simplified participatory non-refractory approach where the traditional means of livelihood of the people are respected, preserved and improved upon from the resources gotten from the community.

6.2 Sustainable Development and Amnesty Programme

It is perhaps, necessary that this paper highlights one programme that the government has initiated to address the problem of 'unsustainability' in the Niger delta. In doing so, the challenge of insecurity has been checkmated to a great extent. The proliferation of small arms has over the past twenty years been sparking conflicts and undermining the rule of law and spawning a culture of violence and impunity in the region. Historically, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in most parts of the Niger delta was not as a result of the presence of myriad of problems but the utter neglect, levity and indifference of the Nigerian state over the complaints of the people. For example, oil wealth enriches Nigeria, but the poverty and deprivation in Niger delta are better imagined than described. Consequently, there was a moral dilemma that arose from the failures of a country that holds so much promise but carries very limited hope for the well being of youth of the region that suffers from hunger and malnutrition, poor health, unemployment and destruction of the environment, poor educational facilities, inhabitable housing since oil exploration and degradation began. On the link between poverty and destruction of the environment, poverty is environmental degradation . . . poverty is the destruction of nature: forest, land, animals, rivers and lakes- here is another tragic cycle-poverty leads to environmental destruction, which perpetuates increasing poverty. Olatoke and Olokooba (2012) put it this way: the collapse of social values, failure of leadership, and neglect of the youth is now a current problem in Nigeria. This vice now increases the spate of unemployment, abject poverty, illiteracy, frustrations and the resurgence of many groups in different parts of the country. Therefore, to counter restiveness in the region, the creation of the Amnesty programme was essentially directed at rationally seeking ways to engage a large population of the youths in healthy and useful ventures to keep the youths busy and take their minds permanently out of militancy thereby ensuring sustainable development.

In essence, Amnesty programme was a brain child of the Technical Committee on Niger Delta which was inaugurated on September 8, 2008 by then late President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The committee among other things recommended amnesty for militant groups which

shall proceed from disarmament through demobilization to reintegration into the Nigerian society (DDR). It had two phases of grant and acceptance of the offer and the post amnesty phase. The first phase included the disarmament and demobilization while the post amnesty phase included reintegration, and hence, amnesty has disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes as its content (interagency coordination report, 2009).

. In its recommendation, and in pursuant of section 175 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria president Umaru Yar'Adua granted amnesty and unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offences associated with militant activities in the Niger delta (Vanguard 2009:9). The amnesty package has been able to bring youth restiveness under control. The amnesty involved surrender, demobilization, disarmament, and subsequent training of ex-militants. It has also been successful in bringing about a very significant reduction in the disruption of oil production and damage to facilities (Mitee, 2009). The Amnesty Programme through the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Components, enlisted about 30, 000 ex-militants of the Niger Delta region. In almost ten years of its implementation, Nigeria's home grown amnesty programme has attracted global recognition and applause (The Guardian; May 29, 2014). The special report on Presidential Amnesty Programme noted that the programme in Nigeria under had during the reintegration phase graduated more than with 70,000 youths in various skills acquisition fields including training are in formal education, studying courses such as Law, Political Science, Business Management, Mass Communication, International Relations, Public Administration, Accountancy, Information & Communication Technology, Medicine, Engineering, Applied Sciences, Radio Electronics, Building & Construction Technology, among others.

7. Methodology

The paper adopts the descriptive and exploratory research designs for reason that this research style is concerned primarily with a qualitative study. It relies on a number of secondary sources of information and data. The descriptive and exploratory research designs involves investigating, recording and analyzing past events with a view to discovering generalizations that are significant in understanding democracy and sustainable development in Nigeria, with particular reference to Niger Delta.

8. Data Analysis/ Discussion of findings

Democracy in Nigeria is going through difficult times as viable democratic institutions such as credible electoral system; independent judiciary, rule of law, etc are yet to take root in the country in the face of such flaws like massive corruption in every facet of the nation's public life. These flaws in the system have become worryingly visible giving rise to disillusion with politics. The ability of the democratic system to transform the lives of the people has clearly manifested in the country's inability to attain sustainable development. In essence, the quest for democracy and sustainable development has been a major pre-occupation of the Nigerian state since her independence in 1960. This aspiration has remained elusive due to many challenges, which have continued to undermine the democratization process in the country. These challenges include

failure of leadership; corruption; insincerity of purpose; lack of political will; lack of proper vision by the political leadership; lack of accountability in governance; amongst others.

In the aspect of good governance with a view to attaining sustainable development, Nigeria has not had the opportunity of being governed by a willing and ready leader since independence, but by those that can at best be described as "accidental leaders". Leaders whom the mantle of leadership fell on them by default not minding their capacity, experience and in most cases, they were neither prepared nor expectant of such huge responsibility. This has been one of the reasons for the country's failures resulting from visionless policies. This underscores the fact that most of our developmental challenges are rooted in lack of sound, visionary and result-oriented leadership. In all the activities of the country's political elites in leadership positions do not seem to understand what democracy and attainment of sustainable development really entail.

Admittedly, Nigeria, today, runs a democratic system of government that is expected to promote democratic values of public accountability; transparency; good conscience; fiscal discipline; due process; amongst others in the bid to attain sustainable development, but the failure to achieve these ingredients explains its crawling posture at 59 years of political independence.

In addition, a degraded environment is not sustainable except negatively. What is sustained in the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta is unsustainability. This is not tautology because the Delta environment has sustained petroleum exploitation for decades while the individual's economic activity has become unsustained. The individuals' economic activity or means of sustenance has a relationship with resource exploitation. If the individual is the one doing the exploitation, the relationship is exponential as his well-being will increase in exploitation (even if his environment deteriorates proportionally). However, in the Niger Delta, the relationship between resource exploitation and the individual is non-linear, has no reciprocal function nor adjustment mechanisms. That is to say, the individual has not been considered as a variable in the exploitation equation until recently.

A serious challenge to democracy and sustainable development in Nigeria is the entrenched corruption in all facets of national life. According to Joseph (2001) cited in Osimiri (2009), corruption has resulted in catastrophic governance in Nigeria. In view of the deleterious effect of endemic corruption on governance, and the war against corruption by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFFC),with regards to transparency, inclusiveness, only a faint picture of some improvement has been recorded. In all these, transparency is one of the prerequisite for development, where it is lacking sustainable development hardly is achieved. Corruption is among the indices for measuring development of a particular state. Nigeria continued to maintain its leading position since the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999. The country in 2001 to 2004 ranked as the second most corrupt country in the world. In 2005, 2006 and 2007 the country was ranked 6th , 21st 32nd most corrupt country in the world, while in 2008and 2009 the country ranked as 59th and 50th and finally pushed to 44th position in 2010(Transparency international corruption perception index 2001-2010). Though there are quite

improvements over the years however the Nigeria is still among the most corrupt country in the world.

Furthermore, the level of impunity has remained a threat to democracy, and the the attainment of sustainable development. From the oil boom to the present oil doom, many stakeholders of the Nigeria's project, still hold doubts on whether sustainable development is achievable under the present democratic dispensation due to growing insecurity, poverty, corruption and unemployment, poverty and destruction of the environment, environmental degradation . . . the destruction of nature: forest, land, animals, rivers and lakes, which perpetuates increasing untold hardship, poverty and underdevelopment. Apart from the environmental degradation constituting a danger to biotic life in the spillage areas, oil spillage, despoil agricultural land and render beaches unusable. The ecosystems of the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta have been destroyed by the phenomenon of oil spillage (Mba, 2001 (a). This anomaly has a link between poverty and destruction of the environment. As a result, the collapse of social values, failure of leadership, and neglect of the youth increased the spate of unemployment, abject poverty, illiteracy, frustrations and the resurgence of militancy, the introduction of the amnesty programme has in no small measure reduced militancy for the attainment of sustainable development.

Finally, it has been pointed out that in the political arena, even though elections are gradually becoming part of the political culture in Nigeria, they are typically manipulated and hijacked by "money bags" and incumbents, who deploy all state's apparatus of power and resources to ensure their re-election. Thus, elections in Nigeria are largely nothing but a charade to perpetuate the reign of the perfidious. Free and fair elections confer legitimacy on the electoral process. The wide spread electoral malpractices, which often characterize elections in Nigeria are inimical to the consolidation of democracy and the attainment of sustainable development.

9. Conclusion

This paper critically examined the issues of democracy, and sustainable development in the Nigerian context. It discovered that the state of environmental degradation in Nigeria is alarming this is consequent upon man's increased economic activities in his relationship with the environment. Oil spillage; soil erosion and water flood, deforestation among others are fast threatening the sustainability of development in the country. Thus, Nigerians are not only disenchanted and disillusioned with the way and manner the government is toying with the public affairs but also lost hope in the leadership of the country at all levels of government.

Basically, it is ordinary people from different countries, collaborating with one another, who can ultimately bring about the social change needed to prevent the environmental calamity that looms ahead. For sustainable development to be meaningful over consumption has to be brought under control. The principles of equity, conservation orientation and renewability have to be reestablished. Controlling over-consumption and dealing with the question of ownership are crucial. The earth functions in a systematic way and any unsystematic intervention will cause irreparable damage not only for the development but also for the existence of mankind. Thus, industrial development today has to be done within the carrying capacity of the planet. Human

beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

In view of all these, the paper hinges the prospect of attaining sustainable development n environmentally degraded Niger delta as follows:

i.   Industrial plants and other companies should be made to recognize and adhere strictly to the laws and policies that guides the discharge of their wastes in such a way that it will not constitute a threat to the environment and the people there.

ii.   The government should encourage other sources of alternative energy supply and raw materials so as to reduce the dependence on fire wood for family cooking and as well the use of woods and timber in construction industries.

iii   Since the Report of the Brundtland Commission emphasized the social and economic dimensions of sustainability, revealing links between, for example, poverty and environmental degradation. At the heart of the concept is the belief that social, economic and environmental objectives should be complementary and interdependent in the development process. Sustainable development requires policy changes in many sectors and coherence between them. It entails balancing the economic, social and environmental objectives of society the three pillars of sustainable development integrating them where ever possible, through mutually supportive policies and practices and making trade-offs where it is not.The federal government efforts on the tree planting campaigns should be intensified so as to ensure the continued replacement of the trees already destroyed.

iv   Sustainable development has economic, social, environmental and ethical dimensions. From an economic perspective, a resource is efficiently allocated and optimally utilized if it is put to the use that generates the highest possible returns (Hammond and Somevi, 2009). In free enterprise economies, the first two causes of poverty and economic malaise may be overcome by setting in place a broad legal as well as effective and quality infrastructural framework within which individuals and actors could pursue their self interest. The required legal framework should therefore consist of laws and security rules that promote sound investment, and access to financial, labour and land transactions.

v.   The government should as a matter of priority and special interest address the problems of the oil producing communities and the Niger Delta areas so as to ensure the continued existence of peace in the areas, a healthy atmosphere and a life-sustaining environment. This should be done in partnership with the oil prospecting companies there and other international governmental and non - governmental agencies.

vi.   There should be the funding of research on the flood and erosion control measures, general environmental pollution protection and management of degraded environments and finally a comprehensive environmental education programme at both formal and

informal levels that will with time raise the development of positive attitudes and commitments of the people towards environmental management and preservation.

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